Riverside Literature Series

WARNER'S A-Hunting of The Deer and Other Essays

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The Riverside Literature Series

A-HUNTING OF THE DEER AND OTHER ESSAYS

BY

CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER

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CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

Like Mr. Aldrich, who played with his boyhood in *The Story of a Bad Boy*, Mr. Warner dealt with himself as a sort of third person in *Being a Boy*, the scenes of which are laid in a primitive Massachusetts country neighborhood. The place which stood for its portrait in the book is Charlemont, near the eastern opening of the Hoosac tunnel. Here Mr. Warner spent his boyhood, removing to the place, when his father died, from Plainfield, in the same State, where he was born September 12, 1829. He was five years old when he was taken to Charlemont, and he remained there eight years, and then removed to Cazenovia, N. Y. His guardian intended him for business life, and placed him after his school days as clerk in a store, but his intellectual ambition was strong, and against all adverse fates he secured a collegiate education at Hamilton College, where he graduated in 1851. His college many years later conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Letters.

When he was in college he showed his bent for literature by contributing to the magazines of the day, and shortly after graduating compiled a *Book of Eloquence*. For the next half dozen years he was busy establishing himself in life, choosing the law at first as his profession, but really practicing the various pursuits which should finally qualify him for his predestined vocation as a man of letters. He spent two years in frontier life with a surveying party in Missouri, mainly to secure a more robust condition of body; he lectured, did hack work, wrote letters to journals, looked wistfully at public life and oratory, opened a law office in Chicago, and took what legal business he could find.

It was while he was there living by miscellaneous ventures that J. R. Hawley, now U. S. Senator from Connecticut, was attracted by the letters which Mr. Warner was contributing to his paper, the *Hartford Press*, and invited his correspondent to remove to Hartford and become assistant editor of the paper. This was shortly before the opening of the war for the Union. When Mr. Hawley entered the army, Mr. Warner became editor in chief; and when the *Press* became merged in the older and more substantial *Courant*, he became one of the proprietors and editors of that paper.

In that position he remained until his death, although in his last years he was relieved from much of the office work of an editor. It was in connection with his journalistic duties that his first real stroke in literature was made. He was busy with the political discussions in which the press was involved, and most of his writing was of this sort. But his morning recreation in his garden suggested to him the relief of writing playful sketches for his paper, drawn from this occupation, and the popularity attending them led to a collection of the sketches in the well-known volume *My Summer in a Garden*.

In 1868 Mr. Warner went to Europe for a year and turned his travel-experience into sketches which were gathered into *Saunterings*. This was the beginning of his more distinctly literary life. He found his pleasure as well as his recuperation thereafter chiefly in rambling and in noting men and things. The more distinctive of his books of travel growing out of this habit were *Baddeck and That Sort of Thing*, which is a humorous sketch of a journey in Nova Scotia and among the scenes of Longfellow's *Evangeline*; books of eastern travel, *My Winter on the Nile* and *In the Levant;* rambles chiefly in the Spanish peninsula under the name *A Roundabout Journey*, and a number of papers relating to American life and scenery gathered into the two volumes *Studies in the South and West* and *Our Italy*.

a warm eulogy of southern California. A genuine love of nature bore rich fruit in the Adirondack sketches *In the Wilderness*, from which the contents of this selection are taken.

By a natural transfer of his own habit into a more purely literary expression, Mr. Warner wrote a book, half story, half travel, entitled *Their Pilgrimage*, which carried several characters from one watering-place in America to another, enabling him thus to sketch manners and make observations in a light, satiric vein, on some phases of American life. This venture it was that led him probably into the more positive field of fictitious literature, and he produced *A Little Journey in the World*, which, under the guise of story, was really a serious inquiry into the tendencies of social life when affected strongly by the insidious influence of wealth, especially newly-gotten wealth. The publication of this novel led to the writing of two other novels, *The Golden House* and *That Fortune*, published at intervals of a few years. These novels carried forward some of the inquiries started in *A Little Journey in the World*, and the reappearance of certain characters, with a further delineation of their experience, gives the three books something of the form of a trilogy.

For several years Mr. Warner held an editorial position on *Harper's Monthly*, and many of his contributions were made to that magazine. The light, suggestive essay, best illustrated by his *Backlog Studies*, is perhaps the form of literature with which he is most identified, but the serious side of his nature is never held distinct from the humorous, as the vein of humor also runs through his more solid work. His interest in literature was always very strong, and led him into the delivery of some forcible addresses at college anniversaries and into the editorship of the *American Men of Letters* series, to which he contributed the volume on Washington Irving, who was his first great admiration in modern literature. He also conducted, as editor in chief,

the extensive work entitled *Library of the World's Best Literature*. His interest in literature and travel was not that of a dilettante. His humor is scarcely more prominent than his earnest thoughtfulness, and he gave practical expression to his thought in the part which he took in public affairs in Hartford and in the moving question of prison reform.

Mr. Warner died in Hartford, Conn., October 20, 1900.

A-HUNTING OF THE DEER.

If civilization owes a debt of gratitude to the self-sacrificing sportsmen who have cleared the Adirondack regions of catamounts and savage trout, what shall be said of the army which has so nobly relieved them of the terror of the deer? The deer-slayers have somewhat celebrated their exploits in print; but I think that justice has never been done them.

The American deer in the wilderness, left to himself, leads a comparatively harmless but rather stupid life, with only such excitement as his own timid fancy raises. It was very seldom that one of his tribe was eaten by the North American tiger. For a wild animal he is very domestic, simple in his tastes, regular in his habits, affectionate in his family. Unfortunately for his repose, his haunch is as tender as his heart. Of all wild creatures he is one of the most graceful in action, and he poses with the skill of an experienced model. I have seen the goats on Mount Pentelicus scatter at the approach of a stranger, climb to the sharp points of projecting rocks, and attitudinize in the most self-conscious manner, striking at once those picturesque postures against the sky with which Oriental pictures have made us and them familiar. But the whole proceeding was theatrical. Greece is the home of art, and it is rare to find anything there natural and unstudied. I presume that

these goats have no nonsense about them when they are alone with the goat-herds, any more than the goat-herds have, except when they come to pose in the studio; but the long ages of culture, the presence always to the eye of the best models and the forms of immortal beauty, the heroic friezes of the Temple of Theseus, the marble processions of sacrificial animals have had a steady moulding, educating influence equal to a society of decorative art upon the people and the animals who have dwelt in this artistic atmosphere. The Attic goat has become an artificially artistic being; though of course he is not now what he was, as a poser, in the days of Polycletus. There is opportunity for a very instructive essay by Mr. E. A. Freeman on the decadence of the Attic goat under the influence of the Ottoman Turk.

The American deer, in the free atmosphere of our country, and as yet untouched by our decorative art, is without self-consciousness, and all his attitudes are free and unstudied. The favorite position of the deer — his fore-feet in the shallow margin of the lake, among the lily-pads, his antlers thrown back and his nose in the air at the moment he hears the stealthy breaking of a twig in the forest — is still spirited and graceful, and wholly unaffected by the pictures of him which the artists have put upon canvas.

Wherever you go in the Northern forest, you will find deer-paths. So plainly marked and well-trodden are they, that it is easy to mistake them for trails made by hunters; but he who follows one of them is soon in difficulties. He may find himself climbing through cedar-thickets an almost inaccessible cliff, or immersed in the intricacies of a marsh. The "run," in one direction, will lead to water; but, in the other,

it climbs the highest hills, to which the deer retires, for safety and repose, in impenetrable thickets. The hunters, in winter, find them congregated in "yards," where they can be surrounded and shot as easily as our troops shoot Comanche women and children in their winter villages. These little paths are full of pitfalls among the roots and stones; and, nimble as the deer is, he sometimes breaks one of his slender legs in them. Yet he knows how to treat himself without a surgeon. I knew of a tame deer in a settlement in the edge of the forest who had the misfortune to break her leg. She immediately disappeared with a delicacy rare in an invalid, and was not seen for two weeks. Her friends had given her up, supposing that she had dragged herself away into the depths of the woods, and died of starvation; when one day she returned, cured of lameness, but thin as a virgin shadow. She had the sense to shun the doctor; to lie down in some safe place, and patiently wait for her leg to heal. I have observed in many of the more refined animals this sort of shyness and reluctance to give trouble which excite our admiration when noticed in mankind.

The deer is called a timid animal, and taunted with possessing courage only when he is "at bay;" the stag will fight when he can no longer flee; and the doe will defend her young in the face of murderous enemies. The deer gets little credit for this eleventh-hour bravery. But I think that in any truly Christian condition of society the deer would not be conspicuous for cowardice. I suppose that if the American girl, even as she is described in foreign romances, were pursued by bull-dogs, and fired at from behind fences every time she ventured out-doors, she would

become timid, and reluctant to go abroad. When that golden era comes which the poets think is behind us, and the prophets declare is about to be ushered in by the opening of the "vials," and the killing of everybody who does not believe as those nations believe which have the most cannon; when we all live in real concord, — perhaps the gentle-hearted deer will be respected, and will find that men are not more savage to the weak than are the cougars and panthers. If the little spotted fawn can think, it must seem to her a queer world in which the advent of innocence is hailed by the baying of fierce hounds and the "ping" of the rifle.

Hunting the deer in the Adirondacks is conducted in the most manly fashion. There are several methods, and in none of them is a fair chance to the deer considered. A favorite method with the natives is practised in winter, and is called by them "still hunting." My idea of still hunting is for one man to go alone into the forest, look about for a deer, put his wits fairly against the wits of the keen-scented animal, and kill his deer, or get lost in the attempt. There seems to be a sort of fairness about this. It is private assassination, tempered with a little uncertainty about finding your man. The still hunting of the natives has all the romance and danger attending the slaughter of sheep in an abattoir. As the snow gets deep, many deer congregate in the depths of the forest, and keep a place trodden down, which grows larger as they tramp down the snow in search of food. In time this refuge becomes a sort of "yard," surrounded by unbroken snow-banks. The hunters then make their way to this retreat on snow-shoes, and from the top of the banks pick off the deer at leisure with their rifles,

and haul them away to market, until the enclosure is pretty much emptied. This is one of the surest methods of exterminating the deer; it is also one of the most merciful; and, being the plan adopted by our government for civilizing the Indian, it ought to be popular. The only people who object to it are the summer sportsmen. They naturally want some pleasure out of the death of the deer.

Some of our best sportsmen, who desire to protract the pleasure of slaying deer through as many seasons as possible, object to the practice of the hunters, who make it their chief business to slaughter as many deer in a camping-season as they can. Their own rule, they say, is to kill a deer only when they need venison to eat. Their excuse is specious. What right have these sophists to put themselves into a desert place, out of the reach of provisions, and then ground a right to slay deer on their own improvidence? If it is necessary for these people to have anything to eat, which I doubt, it is not necessary that they should have the luxury of venison.

One of the most picturesque methods of hunting the poor deer is called "floating." The person, with murder in his heart, chooses a cloudy night, seats himself, rifle in hand, in a canoe, which is noiselessly paddled by the guide, and explores the shore of the lake or the dark inlet. In the bow of the boat is a light in a "jack," the rays of which are shielded from the boat and its occupants. A deer comes down to feed upon the lily-pads. The boat approaches him. He looks up, and stands a moment, terrified or fascinated by the bright flames. In that moment the sportsman is supposed to shoot the deer. As an historical fact, his hand usually shakes, so that he misses the animal,

or only wounds him; and the stag limps away to die after days of suffering. Usually, however, the hunters remain out all night, get stiff from cold and the cramped position in the boat, and, when they return in the morning to camp, cloud their future existence by the assertion that they "heard a big buck" moving along the shore, but the people in camp made so much noise that he was frightened off.

By all odds, the favorite and prevalent mode is hunting with dogs. The dogs do the hunting, the men the killing. The hounds are sent into the forest to rouse the deer, and drive him from his cover. They climb the mountains, strike the trails, and go baying and yelping on the track of the poor beast. The deer have their established run-ways, as I said; and, when they are disturbed in their retreat, they are certain to attempt to escape by following one which invariably leads to some lake or stream. All that the hunter has to do is to seat himself by one of these run-ways, or sit in a boat on the lake, and wait the coming of the pursued deer. The frightened beast, fleeing from the unreasoning brutality of the hounds, will often seek the open country, with a mistaken confidence in the humanity of man. To kill a deer when he suddenly passes one on a run-way demands presence of mind, and quickness of aim: to shoot him from the boat, after he has plunged panting into the lake, requires the rare ability to hit a moving object the size of a deer's head a few rods distant. Either exploit is sufficient to make a hero of a common man. To paddle up to the swimming deer, and cut his throat, is a sure means of getting venison, and has its charms for some. Even women, and doctors of divinity, have enjoyed this exquisite pleasure. It

cannot be denied that we are so constituted by a wise Creator as to feel a delight in killing a wild animal which we do not experience in killing a tame one.

The pleasurable excitement of a deer-hunt has never, I believe, been regarded from the deer's point of view. I happen to be in a position by reason of a lucky Adirondack experience, to present it in that light. I am sorry if this introduction to my little story has seemed long to the reader: it is too late now to skip it; but he can *recoup* himself by omitting the story.

Early on the morning of the 23d of August, 1877, a doe was feeding on Basin Mountain. The night had been warm and showery, and the morning opened in an undecided way. The wind was southerly: it is what the deer call a dog-wind, having come to know quite well the meaning of "a southerly wind and a cloudy sky." The sole companion of the doe was her only child, a charming little fawn, whose brown coat was just beginning to be mottled with the beautiful spots which make this young creature as lovely as the gazelle. The buck, its father, had been that night on a long tramp across the mountain to Clear Pond, and had not yet returned: he went ostensibly to feed on the succulent lily-pads there. "He feedeth among the lilies until the day break and the shadows flee away, and he should be here by this hour; but he cometh not," she said, "leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills." Clear Pond was too far off for the young mother to go with her fawn for a night's pleasure. It was a fashionable watering-place at this season among the deer; and the doe may have remembered, not without uneasiness, the moonlight meetings of a frivolous society there. But the buck did not

come: he was very likely sleeping under one of the ledges on Tight Nippin. Was he alone? "I charge you, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not nor awake my love till he please."

The doe was feeding, daintily cropping the tender leaves of the young shoots, and turning from time to time to regard her offspring. The fawn had taken his morning meal, and now lay curled up on a bed of moss, watching contentedly, with his large, soft brown eyes, every movement of his mother. The great eyes followed her with an alert entreaty; and, if the mother stepped a pace or two farther away in feeding, the fawn made a half-movement, as if to rise and follow her. You see, she was his sole dependence in all the world. But he was quickly reassured when she turned her gaze on him; and if, in alarm, he uttered a plaintive cry, she bounded to him at once, and, with every demonstration of affection, licked his mottled skin till it shone again.

It was a pretty picture, — maternal love on the one part, and happy trust on the other. The doe was a beauty, and would have been so considered anywhere, as graceful and winning a creature as the sun that day shone on, — slender limbs, not too heavy flanks, round body, and aristocratic head, with small ears, and luminous, intelligent, affectionate eyes. How alert, supple, free, she was! What untaught grace in every movement! What a charming pose when she lifted her head, and turned it to regard her child! You would have had a companion-picture, if you had seen, as I saw that morning, a baby kicking about among the dry pine-needles on a ledge above the Ausable, in the valley below, while its young mother sat near, with an easel before her touching in

the color of a reluctant landscape, giving a quick look at the sky and the outline of the Twin Mountains, and bestowing every third glance upon the laughing boy, — art in its infancy.

The doe lifted her head a little with a quick motion, and turned her ear to the south. Had she heard something? Probably it was only the south winds in the balsams. There was silence all about in the forest. If the doe had heard anything it was one of the distant noises of the world. There are in the woods occasional moanings, premonitions of change, which are inaudible to the dull ears of men, but which, I have no doubt, the forest-folk hear and understand. If the doe's suspicions were excited for an instant, they were gone as soon. With an affectionate glance at her fawn, she continued picking up her breakfast.

But suddenly she started, head erect, eyes dilated, a tremor in her limbs. She took a step; she turned her head to the south; she listened intently. There was a sound, — a distant, prolonged note, bell-toned, pervading the woods, shaking the air in smooth vibrations. It was repeated. The doe had no doubt now. She shook like the sensitive mimosa when a footstep approaches. It was the baying of a hound! It was far off, — at the foot of the mountain. Time enough to fly; time enough to put miles between her and the hound, before he should come upon her fresh trail; time enough to escape away through the dense forest, and hide in the recesses of Panther Gorge; yes, time enough. But there was the fawn. The cry of the hound was repeated, more distinct this time. The mother instinctively bounded away a few paces. The fawn started up with an anxious bleat. The doe turned; she came back; she could n't leave it. She

bent over it, and licked it, and seemed to say, "Come, my child; we are pursued; we must go." She walked away towards the west, and the little thing skipped after her. It was slow going for the slender legs, over the fallen logs, and through the rasping bushes. The doe bounded in advance, and waited; the fawn scrambled after her, slipping and tumbling along, very groggy yet on its legs, and whining a good deal because its mother kept always moving away from it. The fawn evidently did not hear the hound; the little innocent would even have looked sweetly at the dog, and tried to make friends with it, if the brute had been rushing upon him. By all the means at her command the doe urged her young one on; but it was slow work. She might have been a mile away while they were making a few rods. Whenever the fawn caught up he was quite content to frisk about. He wanted more breakfast, for one thing; and his mother would n't stand still. She moved on continually; and his weak legs were tangled in the roots of the narrow deer-path.

Shortly came a sound that threw the doe into a panic of terror, — a short, sharp yelp, followed by a prolonged howl, caught up and re-echoed by other bayings along the mountain-side. The doe knew what that meant. One hound had caught her trail, and the whole pack responded to the "view-halloo." The danger was certain now; it was near. She could not crawl on in this way; the dogs would soon be upon them. She turned again for flight: the fawn, scrambling after her, tumbled over, and bleated piteously. The baying, now emphasized by the yelp of certainty, came nearer. Flight with the fawn was impossible. The doe returned and stood by it, head

erect, and nostrils distended. She stood perfectly still, but trembling. Perhaps she was thinking. The fawn took advantage of the situation, and began to draw his luncheon ration. The doe seemed to have made up her mind. She let him finish. The fawn, having taken all he wanted, lay down contentedly, and the doe licked him for a moment. Then, with the swiftness of a bird, she dashed away, and in a moment was lost in the forest. She went in the direction of the hounds.

According to all human calculations, she was going into the jaws of death. So she was: all human calculations are selfish. She kept straight on, hearing the baying every moment more distinctly. She descended the slope of the mountain until she reached the more open forest of hard-wood. It was freer going here, and the cry of the pack echoed more resoundingly in the great spaces. She was going due east, when (judging by the sound, the hounds were not far off, though they were still hidden by a ridge) she turned away towards the north, and kept on at a good pace. In five minutes more she heard the sharp, exultant yelp of discovery, and then the deep-mouthed howl of pursuit. The hounds had struck her trail where she turned, and the fawn was safe.

The doe was in good running condition, the ground was not bad, and she felt the exhilaration of the chase. For the moment, fear left her, and she bounded on with the exaltation of triumph. For a quarter of an hour she went on at a slapping pace, clearing the moose-bushes with bound after bound, flying over the fallen logs, pausing neither for brook or ravine. The baying of the hounds grew fainter behind her. But she struck a bad piece of going, a dead-wood slash.

It was marvellous to see her skim over it, leaping among its intricacies, and not breaking her slender legs. No other living animal could do it. But it was killing work. She began to pant fearfully; she lost ground. The baying of the hounds was nearer. She climbed the hard-wood hill at a slower gait: but, once on more level, free ground, her breath came back to her, and she stretched away with new courage, and may be a sort of contempt of her heavy pursuers.

After running at a high speed perhaps half a mile farther, it occurred to her that it would be safe now to turn to the west, and, by a wide circuit, seek her fawn. But, at the moment, she heard a sound that chilled her heart. It was the cry of a hound to the west of her. The crafty brute had made the circuit of the slash, and cut off her retreat. There was nothing to do but to keep on; and on she went, still to the north, with the noise of the pack behind her. In five minutes more she had passed into a hill-side clearing. Cows and young steers were grazing there. She heard a tinkle of bells. Below her, down the mountain-slope, were other clearings, broken by patches of woods. Fences intervened; and a mile or two down lay the valley, the shining Ausable, and the peaceful farm-houses. That way also her hereditary enemies were. Not a merciful heart in all that lovely valley. She hesitated; it was only for an instant. She must cross the Slidebrook Valley if possible, and gain the mountain opposite. She bounded on; she stopped. What was that? From the valley ahead came the cry of a searching hound. All the devils were loose this morning. Every way was closed but one, and that led straight down the mountain to the cluster of houses. Conspicuous among

them was a slender white wooden spire. The doe did not know it was the spire of a Christian chapel, but perhaps she thought that human pity dwelt there, and would be more merciful than the teeth of the hounds.

> "The hounds are baying on my track:
> O white man! will you send me back?"

In a panic, frightened animals will always flee to human-kind from the danger of more savage foes. They always make a mistake in doing so. Perhaps the trait is the survival of an era of peace on earth; perhaps it is a prophecy of the golden age of the future. The business of this age is murder, — the slaughter of animals, the slaughter of fellow-men, by the wholesale. Hilarious poets who never fired a gun write hunting songs, — *Ti-ra-la:* and good bishops write war-songs, — *Ave the Czar!*

The hunted doe went down "the open," clearing the fences splendidly, flying along the stony path. It was a beautiful sight. But consider what a shot it was! If the deer, now, could only have been caught! No doubt there were tender-hearted people in the valley who would have spared her life, shut her up in a stable, and petted her. Was there one who would have let her go back to her waiting fawn? It is the business of civilization to tame or kill.

The doe went on: she left the saw-mill on John's Brook to her right; she turned into a wood-path. As she approached Slide Brook, she saw a boy standing by a tree with a raised rifle. The dogs were not in sight, but she could hear them coming down the hill. There was no time for hesitation. With a tremendous burst of speed she cleared the stream, and, as she touched the bank, heard the "ping" of a rifle bullet in the air above her. The cruel sound gave wings to

the poor thing. In a moment more she was in the opening: she leaped into the travelled road. Which way? Below her in the wood was a load of hay: a man and a boy, with pitchforks in their hands, were running towards her. She turned south, and flew along the street. The town was up. Women and children ran to the doors and windows; men snatched their rifles; shots were fired; at the big boarding-houses, the summer boarders, who never have anything to do came out and cheered; a camp-stool was thrown from a veranda. Some young fellows shooting at a mark in the meadow saw the flying deer, and popped away at her: but they were accustomed to a mark that stood still. It was all so sudden! There were twenty people who were just going to shoot her; when the doe leaped the road fence, and went away across a marsh towards the foot-hills. It was a fearful gauntlet to run. But nobody except the deer considered it in that light. Everybody told what he was just going to do! everybody who had seen the performance was a kind of hero, — everybody except the deer. For days and days it was the subject of conversation; and the summer boarders kept their guns at hand, expecting another deer would come to be shot at.

The doe went away to the foot-hills, going now slower, and evidently fatigued, if not frightened half to death. Nothing is so appalling to a recluse as a half a mile of summer boarders. As the deer entered the thin woods she saw a rabble of people start across the meadow in pursuit. By this time, the dogs, panting and lolling out their tongues, came swinging along, keeping the trail, like stupids, and consequently losing ground when the deer doubled. But, when the

doe had got into the timber, she heard the savage brutes howling across the meadow. (It is well enough, perhaps, to say that nobody offered to shoot the dogs.)

The courage of the panting fugitive was not gone: she was game to the tip of her high-bred ears. But the fearful pace at which she had just been going told on her. Her legs trembled, and her heart beat like a trip-hammer. She slowed her speed perforce, but still fled industriously up the right bank of the stream. When she had gone a couple of miles, and the dogs were evidently gaining again, she crossed the broad, deep brook, climbed the steep, left bank, and fled on in the direction of the Mount Marcy trail. The fording of the river threw the hounds off for a time. She knew, by their uncertain yelping up and down the opposite bank, that she had a little respite: she used it, however, to push on until the baying was faint in her ears; and then she dropped, exhausted, upon the ground.

This rest, brief as it was, saved her life. Roused again by the baying pack, she leaped forward with better speed, though without that keen feeling of exhilarating flight that she had in the morning. It was still a race for life; but the odds were in her favor, she thought. She did not appreciate the dogged persistence of the hounds, nor had any inspiration told her that the race is not to the swift. She was a little confused in her mind where to go; but an instinct kept her course to the left, and consequently farther away from her fawn. Going now slower, and now faster, as the pursuit seemed more distant or nearer, she kept to the south-west, crossed the stream again, left Panther Gorge on her right, and ran on by Hay-

stack and Skylight in the direction of the Upper Ausable Pond. I do not know her exact course through this maze of mountains, swamps, ravines, and frightful wildernesses. I only know that the poor thing worked her way along painfully, with sinking heart and unsteady limbs, lying down "dead-beat" at intervals, and then spurred on by the cry of the remorseless dogs, until, late in the afternoon she staggered down the shoulder of Bartlett, and stood upon the shore of the lake. If she could put that piece of water between her and her pursuers, she would be safe. Had she strength to swim it?

At her first step into the water she saw a sight that sent her back with a bound. There was a boat mid-lake; two men were in it. One was rowing: the other had a gun in his hand. They were looking towards her: they had seen her. (She did not know that they had heard the baying of hounds on the mountains, and had been lying in wait for her an hour.) What should she do? The hounds were drawing near. No escape that way, even if she could still run. With only a moment's hesitation she plunged into the lake, and struck obliquely across. Her tired legs could not propel the tired body rapidly. She saw the boat headed for her. She turned towards the centre of the lake. The boat turned. She could hear the rattle of the oar-locks. It was gaining on her. Then there was a silence. Then there was a splash of the water just ahead of her, followed by a roar round the lake, the words "Confound it all!" and a rattle of the oars again. The doe saw the boat nearing her. She turned irresolutely to the shore whence she came: the dogs were lapping the water, and howling there She turned again to the centre of the lake.

The brave, pretty creature was quite exhausted now. In a moment more, with a rush of water, the boat was on her, and the man at the oars had leaned over and caught her by the tail.

"Knock her on the head with that paddle!" he shouted to the gentleman in the stern.

The gentleman *was* a gentleman, with a kind, smooth-shaven face, and might have been a minister of some sort of everlasting gospel. He took the paddle in his hand. Just then the doe turned her head, and looked at him with her great, appealing eyes.

"I can't do it! my soul, I can't do it!" and he dropped the paddle. "Oh, let her go!"

"Let thunder go!" was the only response of the guide as he slung the deer round, whipped out his hunting-knife, and made a pass that severed her jugular.

And the gentleman ate that night of the venison.

The buck returned about the middle of the afternoon. The fawn was bleating piteously, hungry and lonesome. The buck was surprised. He looked about in the forest. He took a circuit and came back. His doe was nowhere to be seen. He looked down at the fawn in a helpless sort of way. The fawn appealed for his supper. The buck had nothing whatever to give his child, — nothing but his sympathy. If he said anything, this is what he said: "I 'm the head of this family; but, really, this is a novel case. I 've nothing whatever for you. I don't know what to do. I 've the feelings of a father; but you can't live on *them*. Let us travel."

The buck walked away: the little one toddled after him. They disappeared in the forest.

HOW I KILLED A BEAR.

So many conflicting accounts have appeared about my casual encounter with an Adirondack bear last summer, that in justice to the public, to myself, and to the bear, it is necessary to make a plain statement of the facts. Besides, it is so seldom I have occasion to kill a bear, that the celebration of the exploit may be excused.

The encounter was unpremeditated on both sides. I was not hunting for a bear, and I have no reason to suppose that a bear was looking for me. The fact is, that we were both out blackberrying, and met by chance, — the usual way. There is among the Adirondack visitors always a great deal of conversation about bears, — a general expression of the wish to see one in the woods, and much speculation as to how a person would act if he or she chanced to meet one. But bears are scarce and timid, and appear only to a favored few.

It was a warm day in August, just the sort of day when an adventure of any kind seemed impossible. But it occurred to the housekeepers at our cottage — there were four of them — to send me to the clearing, on the mountain back of the house, to pick blackberries. It was rather a series of small clearings, running up into the forest, much overgrown with bushes and briers, and not unromantic. Cows pastured there,

penetrating through the leafy passages from one opening to another, and browsing among the bushes. I was kindly furnished with a six-quart pail, and told not to be gone long.

Not from any predatory instinct, but to save appearances, I took a gun. It adds to the manly aspect of a person with a tin pail if he also carries a gun. It was possible I might start up a partridge; though how I was to hit him, if he started up instead of standing still, puzzled me. Many people use a shot-gun for partridges. I prefer the rifle: it makes a clean job of death, and does not prematurely stuff the bird with globules of lead. The rifle was a Sharp's, carrying a ball cartridge (ten to the pound), — an excellent weapon belonging to a friend of mine, who had intended, for a good many years back, to kill a deer with it. He could hit a tree with it — if the wind did not blow, and the atmosphere was just right, and the tree was not too far off — nearly every time. Of course, the tree must have some size. Needless to say that I was at that time no sportsman. Years ago I killed a robin under the most humiliating circumstances. The bird was in a low cherry-tree. I loaded a big shot-gun pretty full, crept up under the tree, rested the gun on the fence, with the muzzle more than ten feet from the bird, shut both eyes, and pulled the trigger. When I got up to see what had happened, the robin was scattered about under the tree in more than a thousand pieces, no one of which was big enough to enable a naturalist to decide from it to what species it belonged. This disgusted me with the life of a sportsman. I mention the incident to show, that, although I went blackberrying armed, there was not much inequality between me and the bear.

In this blackberry-patch bears had been seen. The summer before, our colored cook, accompanied by a little girl of the vicinage, was picking berries there one day, when a bear came out of the woods, and walked towards them. The girl took to her heels, and escaped. Aunt Chloe was paralyzed with terror. Instead of attempting to run, she sat down on the ground where she was standing, and began to weep and scream, giving herself up for lost. The bear was bewildered by this conduct. He approached and looked at her; he walked around and surveyed her. Probably he had never seen a colored person before, and did not know whether she would agree with him: at any rate, after watching her a few moments, he turned about, and went into the forest. This is an authentic instance of the delicate consideration of a bear, and is much more remarkable than the forbearance towards the African slave of the well-known lion, because the bear had no thorn in his foot.

When I had climbed the hill, I set up my rifle against a tree, and began picking berries, lured on from bush to bush by the black gleam of fruit (that always promises more in the distance than it realizes when you reach it); penetrating farther and farther, through leaf-shaded cow-paths flecked with sunlight, into clearing after clearing. I could hear on all sides the tinkle of bells, the cracking of sticks, and the stamping of cattle that were taking refuge in the thicket from the flies. Occasionally, as I broke through a covert, I encountered a meek cow, who stared at me stupidly for a second, and then shambled off into the brush. I became accustomed to this dumb society, and picked on in silence, attributing all the wood noises to the cattle, thinking nothing of any

real bear. In point of fact, however, I was thinking all the time of a nice romantic bear, and, as I picked, was composing a story about a generous she-bear who had lost her cub, and who seized a small girl in this very wood, carried her tenderly off to a cave, and brought her up on bear's milk and honey. When the girl got big enough to run away, moved by her inherited instincts, she escaped, and came into the valley to her father's house (this part of the story was to be worked out, so that the child would know her father by some family resemblance, and have some language in which to address him), and told him where the bear lived. The father took his gun, and, guided by the unfeeling daughter, went into the woods and shot the bear, who never made any resistance, and only, when dying, turned reproachful eyes upon her murderer. The moral of the tale was to be kindness to animals.

I was in the midst of this tale, when I happened to look some rods away to the other edge of the clearing, and there was a bear! He was standing on his hind-legs, and doing just what I was doing, — picking blackberries. With one paw he bent down the bush, while with the other he clawed the berries into his mouth, — green ones and all. To say that I was astonished is inside the mark. I suddenly discovered that I didn't want to see a bear, after all. At about the same moment the bear saw me, stopped eating berries, and regarded me with a glad surprise. It is all very well to imagine what you would do under such circumstances. Probably you would n't do it: I did n't. The bear dropped down on his fore-feet, and came slowly towards me. Climbing a tree was of no use, with so good a climber in the rear. If I started to run, I had no doubt the bear would give chase; and

although a bear cannot run down hill as fast as he can run up hill, yet I felt that he could get over this rough, brush-tangled ground faster than I could.

The bear was approaching. It suddenly occurred to me how I could divert his mind until I could fall back upon my military base. My pail was nearly full of excellent berries, — much better than the bear could pick himself. I put the pail on the ground, and slowly backed away from it, keeping my eye, as beast-tamers do, on the bear. The ruse succeeded.

The bear came up to the berries, and stopped. Not accustomed to eat out of a pail, he tipped it over, and nosed about in the fruit, "gorming" (if there is such a word) it down, mixed with leaves and dirt, like a pig. The bear is a worse feeder than the pig. Whenever he disturbs a maple-sugar camp in the spring, he always upsets the buckets of sirup, and tramples round in the sticky sweets, wasting more than he eats. The bear's manners are thoroughly disagreeable.

As soon as my enemy's head was down, I started and ran. Somewhat out of breath, and shaky, I reached my faithful rifle. It was not a moment too soon. I heard the bear crashing through the brush after me. Enraged at my duplicity, he was now coming on with blood in his eye. I felt that the time of one of us was probably short. The rapidity of thought at such moments of peril is well known. I thought an octavo volume, had it illustrated and published, sold fifty thousand copies, and went to Europe on the proceeds, while that bear was loping across the clearing. As I was cocking the gun, I made a hasty and unsatisfactory review of my whole life. I noted that, even in such a compulsory review, it is almost impossible to think of any good thing you have done. The sins

come out uncommonly strong. I recollected a newspaper subscription I had delayed paying years and years ago, until both editor and newspaper were dead, and which now never could be paid to all eternity.

The bear was coming on.

I tried to remember what I had read about encounters with bears. I could n't recall an instance in which a man had run away from a bear in the woods and escaped, although I recalled plenty where the bear had run from the man and got off. I tried to think what is the best way to kill a bear with a gun, when you are not near enough to club him with the stock. My first thought was to fire at his head; to plant the ball between his eyes; but this is a dangerous experiment. The bear's brain is very small; and unless you hit that, the bear does not mind a bullet in his head; that is, not at the time. I remembered that the instant death of the bear would follow a bullet planted just back of his fore-leg, and sent into his heart. This spot is also difficult to reach, unless the bear stands off, side towards you, like a target. I finally determined to fire at him generally.

The bear was coming on.

The contest seemed to me very different from anything at Creedmoor. I had carefully read the reports of the shooting there; but it was not easy to apply the experience I had thus acquired. I hesitated whether I had better fire lying on my stomach; or lying on my back, and resting the gun on my toes. But in neither position, I reflected, could I see the bear until he was upon me. The range was too short; and the bear would n't wait for me to examine the thermometer, and note the direction of the wind. Trial of the Creedmoor method, therefore, had to be

abandoned; and I bitterly regretted that I had not read more accounts of offhand shooting.

For the bear was coming on.

I tried to fix my last thoughts upon my family. As my family is small, this was not difficult. Dread of displeasing my wife, or hurting her feelings, was uppermost in my mind. What would be her anxiety as hour after hour passed on, and I did not return! What would the rest of the household think as the afternoon passed, and no blackberries came! What would be my wife's mortification when the news was brought that her husband had been eaten by a bear! I cannot imagine any thing more ignominious than to have a husband eaten by a bear. And this was not my only anxiety. The mind at such times is not under control. With the gravest fears the most whimsical ideas will occur. I looked beyond the mourning friends, and thought what kind of an epitaph they would be compelled to put upon the stone. Something like this: —

HERE LIE THE REMAINS

OF

———— ————,

EATEN BY A BEAR

Aug. 20, 1877.

It is a very unheroic and even disagreeable epitaph. That "eaten by a bear" is intolerable. It is grotesque. And then I thought what an inadequate language the English is for compact expression. It would not answer to put upon the stone simply "eaten;" for that is indefinite, and requires explanation: it might mean eaten by a cannibal. This difficulty could not occur in the German, where *essen* signifies the act of

feeding by a man, and *fressen* by a beast. How simple the thing would be in German! —

HIER LIEGT

HOCHWOHLGEBOREN

HERR ——— ———,

GEFRESSEN

Aug. 20, 1877.

That explains itself. The well-born one was eaten by a beast, and presumably by a bear, — an animal that has a bad reputation since the days of Elisha.

The bear was coming on; he had, in fact, come on. I judged that he could see the whites of my eyes. All my subsequent reflections were confused. I raised the gun, covered the bear's breast with the sight, and let drive. Then I turned, and ran like a deer. I did not hear the bear pursuing. I looked back. The bear had stopped. He was lying down. I then remembered that the best thing to do after having fired your gun is to reload it. I slipped in a charge, keeping my eyes on the bear. He never stirred. I walked back suspiciously. There was a quiver in the hind-legs, but no other motion. Still he might be shamming: bears often sham. To make sure, I approached, and put a ball into his head. He did not mind it now: he minded nothing. Death had come to him with a merciful suddenness. He was calm in death. In order that he might remain so, I blew his brains out, and then started for home. I had killed a bear!

Notwithstanding my excitement, I managed to saunter into the house with an unconcerned air. There was a chorus of voices: —

"Where are your blackberries?"

"Why were you gone so long?"

"Where 's your pail?"

"I left the pail."

"Left the pail! What for?"

"A bear wanted it."

"Oh, nonsense!"

"Well, the last I saw of it, a bear had it."

"Oh, come! You did n't really see a bear?"

"Yes, but I did really see a real bear."

"Did he run?"

"Yes; he ran after me."

"I don't believe a word of it. What did you do?"

"Oh! nothing particular — except kill the bear."

Cries of "Gammon!" "Don't believe it!" "Where 's the bear?"

"If you want to see the bear, you must go up into the woods. I could n't bring him down alone."

Having satisfied the household that something extraordinary had occurred, and excited the posthumous fear of some of them for my own safety, I went down into the valley to get help. The great bear-hunter, who keeps one of the summer boarding-houses, received my story with a smile of incredulity; and the incredulity spread to the other inhabitants and to the boarders as soon as the story was known. However, as I insisted in all soberness, and offered to lead them to the bear, a party of forty or fifty people at last started off with me to bring the bear in. Nobody believed there was any bear in the case; but everybody who could get a gun carried one; and we went into the woods armed with guns, pistols, pitchforks, and sticks, against all contingencies or surprises, — a crowd made up mostly of scoffers and jeerers.

But when I led the way to the fatal spot, and

pointed out the bear, lying peacefully wrapped in his own skin, something like terror seized the boarders, and genuine excitement the natives. It was a no-mistake bear, by George! and the hero of the fight — well, I will not insist upon that. But what a procession that was, carrying the bear home! and what a congregation was speedily gathered in the valley to see the bear! Our best preacher up there never drew anything like it on Sunday.

And I must say that my particular friends, who were sportsmen, behaved very well, on the whole. They did n't deny that it was a bear, although they said it was small for a bear. Mr. Deane, who is equally good with a rifle and a rod, admitted that it was a very fair shot. He is probably the best salmon-fisher in the United States, and he is an equally good hunter. I suppose there is no person in America who is more desirous to kill a moose than he. But he needlessly remarked, after he had examined the wound in the bear, that he had seen that kind of a shot made by a cow's horn.

This sort of talk affected me not. When I went to sleep that night, my last delicious thought was, "I 've killed a bear!"

LOST IN THE WOODS.

It ought to be said, by way of explanation, that my being lost in the woods was not premeditated. Nothing could have been more informal. This apology can be necessary only to those who are familiar with the Adirondack literature. Any person not familiar with it would see the absurdity of one going to the Northern Wilderness with the deliberate purpose of writing about himself as a lost man. It may be true that a book about this wild tract would not be recognized as complete without a lost-man story in it; since it is almost as easy for a stranger to get lost in the Adirondacks as in Boston. I merely desire to say that my unimportant adventure is not narrated in answer to the popular demand, and I do not wish to be held responsible for its variation from the typical character of such experiences.

We had been in camp a week, on the Upper Ausable Lake. This is a gem — emerald or turquoise as the light changes it — set in the virgin forest. It is not a large body of water, is irregular in form, and about a mile and a half in length; but in the sweep of its wooded shores, and the lovely contour of the lofty mountains that guard it, the lake is probably the most charming in America. Why the young ladies and gentlemen who camp there occasionally vex the

days and nights with hooting, and singing sentimental songs, is a mystery even to the laughing loon.

I left my companions there one Saturday morning to return to Keene Valley, intending to fish down the Ausable River. The Upper Lake discharges itself into the Lower by a brook which winds through a mile and a half of swamp and woods. Out of the north end of the Lower Lake, which is a huge sink in the mountains, and mirrors the savage precipices, the Ausable breaks its rocky barriers, and flows through a wild gorge, several miles, to the valley below. Between the Lower Lake and the settlements is an extensive forest, traversed by a cart-path, admirably constructed of loose stones, roots of trees, decayed logs, slippery rocks, and mud. The gorge of the river forms its western boundary. I followed this caricature of a road a mile or more; then gave my luggage to the guide to carry home, and struck off through the forest, by compass, to the river. I promised myself an exciting scramble down this little-frequented cañon, and a creel full of trout. There was no difficulty in finding the river, or in descending the steep precipice to its bed: getting into a scrape is usually the easiest part of it. The river is strewn with bowlders, big and little, through which the amber water rushes with an unceasing thunderous roar, now plunging down in white falls, then swirling round in dark pools. The day, already past meridian, was delightful; at least, the blue strip of it I could see overhead.

Better pools and rapids for trout never were, I thought, as I concealed myself behind a bowlder, and made the first cast. There is nothing like the thrill of expectation over the first throw in unfamiliar waters. Fishing is like gambling, in that failure only

excites hope of a fortunate throw next time. There was no rise to the "leader" on the first cast, nor on the twenty-first; and I cautiously worked my way down stream, throwing right and left. When I had gone half a mile, my opinion of the character of the pools was unchanged: never were there such places for trout; but the trout were out of their places. Perhaps they did n't care for the fly: some trout seem to be so unsophisticated as to prefer the worm. I replaced the fly with a baited hook: the worm squirmed; the waters rushed and roared; a cloud sailed across the blue: no trout rose to the lonesome opportunity. There is a certain companionship in the presence of trout, especially when you can feel them flopping in your fish-basket; but it became evident that there were no trout in this wilderness, and a sense of isolation for the first time came over me. There was no living thing near. The river had by this time entered a deeper gorge; walls of rocks rose perpendicularly on either side, — picturesque rocks, painted many colors by the oxide of iron. It was not possible to climb out of the gorge; it was impossible to find a way by the side of the river; and getting down the bed, over the falls, and through the flumes, was not easy, and consumed time.

Was that thunder? Very likely. But thunder-showers are always brewing in these mountain-fortresses, and it did not occur to me that there was any thing personal in it. Very soon, however, the hole in the sky closed in, and the rain dashed down. It seemed a providential time to eat my luncheon; and I took shelter under a scraggy pine that had rooted itself in the edge of the rocky slope. The shower soon passed, and I continued my journey, creeping

over the slippery rocks, and continuing to show my confidence in the unresponsive trout. The way grew wider and more grewsome. The thunder began again, rolling along over the tops of the mountains, and reverberating in sharp concussions in the gorge: the lightning also darted down into the darkening passage, and then the rain. Every enlightened being, even if he is in a fisherman's dress of shirt and pantaloons, hates to get wet; and I ignominiously crept under the edge of a sloping bowlder. It was all very well at first, until streams of water began to crawl along the face of the rock, and trickle down the back of my neck. This was refined misery, unheroic and humiliating, as suffering always is when unaccompanied by resignation.

A longer time than I knew was consumed in this and repeated efforts to wait for the slackening and renewing storm to pass away. In the intervals of calm I still fished, and even descended to what a sportsman considers incredible baseness; I put a "sinker" on my line. It is the practice of the country-folk, whose only object is to get fish, to use a good deal of bait, sink the hook to the bottom of the pools, and wait the slow appetite of the summer trout. I tried this also. I might as well have fished in a pork-barrel. It is true, that, in one deep, black, round pool, I lured a small trout from the bottom, and deposited him in the creel; but it was an accident. Though I sat there in the awful silence (the roar of water only emphasized the stillness) full half an hour, I was not encouraged by another nibble. Hope, however, did not die: I always expected to find the trout in the next flume; and so I toiled slowly on, unconscious of the passing time. At each turn of the

stream I expected to see the end, and at each turn I saw a long, narrow stretch of rocks and foaming water. Climbing out of the ravine was, in most places, simply impossible; and I began to look with interest for a slide, where bushes rooted in the scant earth would enable me to scale the precipice. I did not doubt that I was nearly through the gorge. I could at length see the huge form of the Giant of the Valley, scarred with avalanches, at the end of the vista; and it seemed not far off. But it kept its distance, as only a mountain can, while I stumbled and slid down the rocky way. The rain had now set in with persistence, and suddenly I became aware that it was growing dark, and I said to myself, "If you don't wish to spend the night in this horrible chasm, you 'd better escape speedily." Fortunately I reached a place where the face of the precipice was bush-grown, and with considerable labor scrambled up it.

Having no doubt that I was within half a mile, perhaps within a few rods, of the house above the entrance of the gorge, and that, in any event, I should fall into the cart-path in a few minutes, I struck boldly into the forest, congratulating myself on having escaped out of the river. So sure was I of my whereabouts, that I did not note the bend of the river, nor look at my compass. The one trout in my basket was no burden, and I stepped lightly out.

The forest was of hard-wood, and open, except for a thick undergrowth of moose-bush. It was raining, — in fact, it had been raining, more or less, for a month, — and the woods were soaked. This moose-bush is most annoying stuff to travel through in a rain; for the broad leaves slap one in the face, and sop him with wet. The way grew every moment

more dingy. The heavy clouds above the thick foliage brought night on prematurely. It was decidedly premature to a near-sighted man, whose glasses the rain rendered useless: such a person ought to be at home early. On leaving the river-bank I had borne to the left, so as to be sure to strike either the clearing or the road, and not wander off into the measureless forest. I confidently pursued this course, and went gayly on by the left flank. That I did not come to any opening or path, only showed that I had slightly mistaken the distance: I was going in the right direction.

I was so certain of this, that I quickened my pace, and got up with alacrity every time I tumbled down amid the slippery leaves and catching roots, and hurried on. And I kept to the left. It even occurred to me that I was turning to the left so much, that I might come back to the river again. It grew more dusky, and rained more violently; but there was nothing alarming in the situation, since I knew exactly where I was. It was a little mortifying that I had miscalculated the distance: yet, so far was I from feeling any uneasiness about this, that I quickened my pace again, and, before I knew it, was in a full run; that is, as full a run as a person can indulge in in the dusk, with so many trees in the way. No nervousness, but simply a reasonable desire to get there. I desired to look upon myself as the person "not lost, but gone before." As time passed, and darkness fell, and no clearing or road appeared, I ran a little faster. It did n't seem possible that the people had moved, or the road been changed; and yet I was sure of my direction. I went on with an energy increased by the ridiculousness of the situation, the danger that an

experienced woodsman was in of getting home late for supper; the lateness of the meal being nothing to the gibes of the unlost. How long I kept this course, and how far I went on, I do not know; but suddenly I stumbled against an ill-placed tree, and sat down on the soaked ground, a trifle out of breath. It then occurred to me that I had better verify my course by the compass. There was scarcely light enough to distinguish the black end of the needle. To my amazement, the compass, which was made near Greenwich, was wrong. Allowing for the natural variation of the needle, it was absurdly wrong. It made out that I was going south when I was going north. It intimated, that, instead of turning to the left, I had been making a circuit to the right. According to the compass, the Lord only knew where I was.

The inclination of persons in the woods to travel in a circle is unexplained. I suppose it arises from the sympathy of the legs with the brain. Most people reason in a circle: their minds go round and round, always in the same track. For the last half-hour I had been saying over a sentence that started itself: "I wonder where that *road* is!" I had said it over till it had lost all meaning. I kept going round on it; and yet I could not believe that my body had been travelling in a circle. Not being able to recognize any tracks, I have no evidence that I had so travelled, except the general testimony of lost men.

The compass annoyed me. I 've known experienced guides utterly discredit it. It could n't be that I was to turn about, and go the way I had come. Nevertheless, I said to myself, "You 'd better keep a cool head, my boy, or you are in for a night of it. Better listen to science than to spunk." And I

resolved to heed the impartial needle. I was a little weary of the rough tramping: but it was necessary to be moving; for, with wet clothes and the night air, I was decidedly chilly. I turned towards the north, and slipped and stumbled along. A more uninviting forest to pass the night in I never saw. Everything was soaked. If I became exhausted, it would be necessary to build a fire; and, as I walked on, I could n't find a dry bit of wood. Even if a little punk were discovered in a rotten log, I had no hatchet to cut fuel. I thought it all over calmly. I had the usual three matches in my pocket. I knew exactly what would happen if I tried to build a fire. The first match would prove to be wet. The second match, when struck, would shine and smell, and fizz a little and then go out. There would be only one match left. Death would ensue if it failed. I should get close to the log, crawl under my hat, strike the match, see it catch, flicker, almost go out (the reader painfully excited by this time), blaze up, nearly expire, and finally fire the punk, — thank God! And I said to myself, "The public don't want any more of this thing: it is played out. Either have a box of matches, or let the first one catch fire."

In this gloomy mood I plunged along. The prospect was cheerless; for, apart from the comfort that a fire would give, it is necessary, at night, to keep off the wild beasts. I fancied I could hear the tread of the stealthy brutes following their prey. But there was one source of profound satisfaction, — the catamount had been killed. Mr. Colvin, the triangulating surveyor of the Adirondacks, killed him in his last official report to the State. Whether he despatched him with a theodolite or a barometer does not matter:

he is officially dead, and none of the travellers can kill him any more. Yet he has served them a good turn.

I knew that catamount well. One night when we lay in the bogs of the South Beaver Meadow, under a canopy of mosquitoes, the serene midnight was parted by a wild and human-like cry from a neighboring mountain. "That 's a cat," said the guide. I felt in a moment that it was the voice of "modern cultchah." "Modern culture," says Mr. Joseph Cook in a most impressive period, — "modern culture is a child crying in the wilderness, and with no voice but a cry." That describes the catamount exactly. The next day, when we ascended the mountain, we came upon the traces of this brute, — a spot where he had stood and cried in the night; and I confess that my hair rose with the consciousness of his recent presence, as it is said to do when a spirit passes by.

Whatever consolation the absence of catamount in a dark, drenched, and howling wilderness can impart, that I experienced; but I thought what a satire upon my present condition was modern culture, with its plain thinking and high living! It was impossible to get much satisfaction out of the real and the ideal, — the me and the not-me. At this time what impressed me most was the absurdity of my position looked at in the light of modern civilization and all my advantages and acquirements. It seemed pitiful that society could do absolutely nothing for me. It was, in fact, humiliating to reflect that it would now be profitable to exchange all my possessions for the woods instinct of the most unlettered guide. I began to doubt the value of the "culture" that blunts the natural instincts.

It began to be a question whether I could hold out to walk all night; for I must travel, or perish. And now I imagined that a spectre was walking by my side. This was Famine. To be sure, I had only recently eaten a hearty luncheon: but the pangs of hunger got hold on me when I thought that I should have no supper, no breakfast; and, as the procession of unattainable meals stretched before me, I grew hungrier and hungrier. I could feel that I was becoming gaunt, and wasting away: already I seemed to be emaciated. It is astonishing how speedily a jocund, well-conditioned human being can be transformed into a spectacle of poverty and want. Lose a man in the woods, drench him, tear his pantaloons, get his imagination running on his lost supper and the cheerful fireside that is expecting him, and he will become haggard in an hour. I am not dwelling upon these things to excite the reader's sympathy, but only to advise him, if he contemplates an adventure of this kind, to provide himself with matches, kindling-wood, something more to eat than one raw trout, and not to select a rainy night for it.

Nature is so pitiless, so unresponsive, to a person in trouble! I had read of the soothing companionship of the forest, the pleasure of the pathless woods. But I thought, as I stumbled along in the dismal actuality, that if I ever got out of it I would write a letter to the newspapers, exposing the whole thing. There is an impassive, stolid brutality about the woods that has never been enough insisted on. I tried to keep my mind fixed upon the fact of man's superiority to Nature; his ability to dominate and outwit her. My situation was an amusing satire on this theory. I fancied that I could feel a sneer in the woods at my

detected conceit. There was something personal in it. The downpour of the rain and the slipperiness of the ground were elements of discomfort; but there was, besides these, a kind of terror in the very character of the forest itself. I think this arose not more from its immensity than from the kind of stolidity to which I have alluded. It seemed to me that it would be a sort of relief to kick the trees. I don't wonder that the bears fall to, occasionally, and scratch the bark off the great pines and maples, tearing it angrily away. One must have some vent to his feelings. It is a common experience of people lost in the woods to lose their heads; and even the woodsmen themselves are not free from this panic when some accident has thrown them out of their reckoning. Fright unsettles the judgment: the oppressive silence of the woods is a vacuum in which the mind goes astray. It 's a hollow sham, this pantheism, I said; being "one with Nature" is all humbug: I should like to see somebody. Man, to be sure, is of very little account, and soon gets beyond his depth; but the society of the least human being is better than this gigantic indifference. The "rapture on the lonely shore" is agreeable only when you know you can at any moment go home.

I had now given up all expectation of finding the road, and was steering my way as well as I could northward towards the valley. In my haste I made slow progress. Probably the distance I travelled was short, and the time consumed not long; but I seemed to be adding mile to mile, and hour to hour. I had time to review the incidents of the Russo-Turkish war, and to forecast the entire Eastern question; I outlined the characters of all my companions left in

camp, and sketched in a sort of comedy the sympathetic and disparaging observations they would make on my adventure; I repeated something like a thousand times, without contradiction, "What a fool you were to leave the river!" I stopped twenty times, thinking I heard its loud roar, always deceived by the wind in the tree tops; I began to entertain serious doubts about the compass, — when suddenly I became aware that I was no longer on level ground; I was descending a slope; I was actually in a ravine. In a moment more I was in a brook newly formed by the rain. "Thank Heaven!" I cried: "this I shall follow whatever conscience or the compass says." In this region, all streams go, sooner or later, into the valley. This ravine, this stream, no doubt, led to the river. I splashed and tumbled along down it in mud and water. Down hill we went together, the fall showing that I must have wandered to high ground. When I guessed that I must be close to the river, I suddenly stepped into mud up to my ankles. It was the road, — running, of course, the wrong way, but still the blessed road. It was a mere canal of liquid mud; but man had made it, and it would take me home. I was at least three miles from the point where I supposed I was near at sunset, and I had before me a toilsome walk of six or seven miles, most of the way in a ditch; but it is truth to say I enjoyed every step of it. I was safe; I knew where I was; and I could have walked till morning. The mind had again got the upper hand of the body, and began to plume itself on its superiority: it was even disposed to doubt whether it had been "lost" at all.

CAMPING OUT.

It seems to be agreed that civilization is kept up only by a constant effort. Nature claims its own speedily when the effort is relaxed. If you clear a patch of fertile ground in the forest, uproot the stumps and plant it, year after year, in potatoes and maize, you say you have subdued it. But if you leave it for a season or two, a kind of barbarism seems to steal out upon it from the circling woods; coarse grass and brambles cover it; bushes spring up in a wild tangle; the raspberry and the blackberry flower and fruit, and the humorous bear feeds upon them. The last state of the ground is worse than the first.

Perhaps the cleared spot is called Ephesus. There is a splendid city on the plain; there are temples and theatres on the hills; the commerce of the world seeks its port; the luxury of the Orient flows through its marble streets. You are there one day when the sea has receded: the plain is a pestilent marsh; the temples, the theatres, the lofty gates, have sunken and crumbled, and the wild-brier runs over them; and, as you grow pensive in the most desolate place in the world, a bandit lounges out of a tomb, and offers to relieve you of all that which creates artificial distinctions in society. The higher the civilization has risen, the more abject is the desolation of barbarism that ensues. The most melancholy spot

in the Adirondacks is not a tamarack-swamp, where the traveller wades in moss and mire, and the atmosphere is composed of equal active parts of black-flies, mosquitos, and midges. It is the village of the Adirondack Iron-Works, where the streets of gaunt houses are falling to pieces, tenantless; the factory wheels have stopped; the furnaces are in ruins; the iron and wooden machinery is strewn about in helpless detachment; and heaps of charcoal, ore, and slag proclaim an arrested industry. Beside this deserted village, even Calamity Pond, shallow, sedgy, with its ragged shores of stunted firs, and its melancholy shaft that marks the spot where the proprietor of the iron-works accidentally shot himself, is cheerful.

The instinct of barbarism that leads people periodically to throw away the habits of civilization, and seek the freedom and discomfort of the woods, is explicable enough; but it is not so easy to understand why this passion should be strongest in those who are most refined, and most trained in intellectual and social fastidiousness. Philistinism and shoddy do not like the woods, unless it becomes fashionable to do so; and then, as speedily as possible they introduce their artificial luxuries, and reduce the life in the wilderness to the vulgarity of a well-fed picnic. It is they who have strewn the Adirondacks with paper collars and tin cans. The real enjoyment of camping and tramping in the woods lies in a return to primitive conditions of lodging, dress, and food, in as total an escape as may be from the requirements of civilization. And it remains to be explained why this is enjoyed most by those who are most highly civilized. It is wonderful to see how easily the restraints of society fall off. Of course it is not true that courtesy

depends upon clothes with the best people; but, with others, behavior hangs almost entirely upon dress. Many good habits are easily got rid of in the woods. Doubt sometimes seems to be felt whether Sunday is a legal holiday there. It becomes a question of casuistry with a clergyman whether he may shoot at a mark on Sunday, if none of his congregation are present. He intends no harm: he only gratifies a curiosity to see if he can hit the mark. Where shall he draw the line? Doubtless he might throw a stone at a chipmunk or shout at a loon. Might he fire at a mark with an air-gun that makes no noise? He will not fish or hunt on Sunday (although he is no more likely to catch anything that day than on any other); but may he eat trout that the guide has caught on Sunday, if the guide swears he caught them Saturday night? Is there such a thing as a vacation in religion? How much of our virtue do we owe to inherited habits?

I am not at all sure whether this desire to camp outside of civilization is creditable to human nature, or otherwise. We hear sometimes that the Turk has been merely camping for four centuries in Europe. I suspect that many of us are, after all, really camping temporarily in civilized conditions; and that going into the wilderness is an escape, longed for, into our natural and preferred state. Consider what this "camping out" is, that is confessedly so agreeable to people most delicately reared. I have no desire to exaggerate its delights.

The Adirondack wilderness is essentially unbroken. A few bad roads that penetrate it, a few jolting wagons that traverse them, a few barn-like boarding-houses on the edge of the forest, where the boarders

are soothed by patent coffee, and stimulated to unnatural gayety by Japan tea, and experimented on by unique cookery, do little to destroy the savage fascination of the region. In half an hour, at any point, one can put himself into solitude and every desirable discomfort. The party that covets the experience of the camp comes down to primitive conditions of dress and equipment. There are guides and porters to carry the blankets for beds, the raw provisions, and the camp equipage; and the motley party of the temporarily decivilized files into the woods, and begins, perhaps by a road, perhaps on a trail, its exhilarating and weary march. The exhilaration arises partly from the casting aside of restraint, partly from the adventure of exploration; and the weariness, from the interminable toil of bad walking, a heavy pack, and the grim monotony of trees and bushes, that shut out all prospect, except an occasional glimpse of the sky. Mountains are painfully climbed, streams forded, lonesome lakes paddled over, long and muddy "carries" traversed. Fancy this party the victim of political exile, banished by the law, and a more sorrowful march could not be imagined; but the voluntary hardship becomes pleasure, and it is undeniable that the spirits of the party rise as the difficulties increase.

For this straggling and stumbling band the world is young again: it has come to the beginning of things; it has cut loose from tradition, and is free to make a home anywhere: the movement has all the promise of a revolution. All this virginal freshness invites the primitive instincts of play and disorder. The free range of the forests suggests endless possibilities of exploration and possession. Perhaps we are treading where man since the creation never trod before; per-

haps the waters of this bubbling spring, which we deepen by scraping out the decayed leaves and the black earth, have never been tasted before, except by the wild denizens of these woods. We cross the trails of lurking animals, — paths that heighten our sense of seclusion from the world. The hammering of the infrequent woodpecker, the call of the lonely bird, the drumming of the solitary partridge, — all these sounds do but emphasize the lonesomeness of nature. The roar of the mountain brook, dashing over its bed of pebbles, rising out of the ravine, and spreading, as it were, a mist of sound through all the forest (continuous beating waves that have the rhythm of eternity in them), and the fitful movement of the air-tides through the balsams and firs and the giant pines, — how these grand symphonies shut out the little exasperations of our vexed life! It seems easy to begin life over again on the simplest terms. Probably it is not so much the desire of the congregation to escape from the preacher, or of the preacher to escape from himself, that drives sophisticated people into the wilderness, as it is the unconquered craving for primitive simplicity, the revolt against the everlasting dress-parade of our civilization. From this monstrous pomposity even the artificial rusticity of a Petit Trianon [1] is a relief. It was only human nature that the jaded Frenchman of the regency should run away to the New World, and live in a forest-hut with an Indian squaw; although he found little satisfaction in his act of heroism, unless it was talked about at Versailles.

When our trampers come, late in the afternoon, to the bank of a lovely lake where they purpose to enter the primitive life, everything is waiting for them in

[1] A little palace near the royal one at Versailles.

virgin expectation. There is a little promontory jutting into the lake, and sloping down to a sandy beach, on which the waters idly lapse, and shoals of red-fins and shiners come to greet the stranger; the forest is untouched by the axe; the tender green sweeps the water's edge; ranks of slender firs are marshalled by the shore; clumps of white-birch stems shine in satin purity among the evergreens; the boles of giant spruces, maples, and oaks, lifting high their crowns of foliage, stretch away in endless galleries and arcades; through the shifting leaves the sunshine falls upon the brown earth; overhead are fragments of blue sky; under the boughs and in chance openings appear the bluer lake and the outline of the gracious mountains. The discoverers of this paradise, which they have entered to destroy, note the babbling of the brook that flows close at hand; they hear the splash of the leaping fish; they listen to the sweet, metallic song of the evening thrush, and the chatter of the red squirrel, who angrily challenges their right to be there. But the moment of sentiment passes. This party has come here to eat and to sleep, and not to encourage Nature in her poetic attitudinizing.

The spot for a shanty is selected. This side shall be its opening, towards the lake; and in front of it the fire, so that the smoke shall drift into the hut, and discourage the mosquitoes; yonder shall be the cook's fire and the path to the spring. The whole colony bestir themselves in the foundation of a new home, — an enterprise that has all the fascination, and none of the danger, of a veritable new settlement in the wilderness. The axes of the guides resound in the echoing spaces; great trunks fall with a crash; vistas are opened towards the lake and the mountains. The

spot for the shanty is cleared of underbrush; forked stakes are driven into the ground, cross-pieces are laid on them, and poles sloping back to the ground. In an incredible space of time there is the skeleton of a house, which is entirely open in front. The roof and sides must be covered. For this purpose the trunks of great spruces are skinned. The woodman rims the bark near the foot of the tree, and again six feet above, and slashes it perpendicularly; then, with a blunt stick, he crowds off this thick hide exactly as an ox is skinned. It needs but a few of these skins to cover the roof; and they make a perfectly water-tight roof, except when it rains. Meantime, busy hands have gathered boughs of the spruce and the feathery balsam, and shingled the ground underneath the shanty for a bed. It is an aromatic bed: in theory it is elastic and consoling. Upon it are spread the blankets. The sleepers, of all sexes and ages, are to lie there in a row, their feet to the fire, and their heads under the edge of the sloping roof. Nothing could be better contrived. The fire is in front: it is not a fire, but a conflagration — a vast heap of green logs set on fire — of pitch, and split dead-wood, and crackling balsams, raging and roaring. By the time twilight falls, the cook has prepared supper. Everything has been cooked in a tin pail and a skillet, — potatoes, tea, pork, mutton, slapjacks. You wonder how everything could have been prepared in so few utensils. When you eat, the wonder ceases: everything might have been cooked in one pail. It is a noble meal; and nobly is it disposed of by these amateur savages, sitting about upon logs and roots of trees. Never were there such potatoes, never beans that seemed to have more of the bean in them,

never such curly pork, never trout with more Indian-meal on them, never mutton more distinctly sheepy; and the tea, drunk out of a tin cup, with a lump of maple-sugar dissolved in it, — it is the sort of tea that takes hold, lifts the hair, and disposes the drinker to anecdote and hilariousness. There is nc deception about it: it tastes of tannin and spruce and creosote. Everything, in short, has the flavor of the wilderness and a free life. It is idyllic. And yet, with all our sentimentality, there is nothing feeble about the cooking. The slapjacks are a solid job of work, made to last, and not go to pieces in a person's stomach like a trivial bun: we might record on them, in cuneiform characters, our incipient civilization; and future generations would doubtless turn them up as Acadian bricks. Good, robust victuals are what the primitive man wants.

Darkness falls suddenly. Outside the ring of light from our conflagration the woods are black. There is a tremendous impression of isolation and lonesomeness in our situation. We are the prisoners of the night. The woods never seemed so vast and mysterious. The trees are gigantic. There are noises that we do not understand, — mysterious winds passing overhead, and rambling in the great galleries, tree-trunks grinding against each other, undefinable stirs and uneasinesses. The shapes of those who pass into the dimness are outlined in monstrous proportions. The spectres, seated about in the glare of the fire, talk about appearances and presentiments and religion. The guides cheer the night with bear-fights, and catamount encounters, and frozen-to-death experiences, and simple tales of great prolixity and no point, and jokes of primitive lucidity. We hear cata-

mounts, and the stealthy tread of things in the leaves, and the hooting of owls, and, when the moon rises, the laughter of the loon. Everything is strange, spectral, fascinating.

By and by we get our positions in the shanty for the night, and arrange the row of sleepers. The shanty has become a smoke-house by this time: waves of smoke roll into it from the fire. It is only by lying down, and getting the head well under the eaves, that one can breathe. No one can find her "things;" nobody has a pillow. At length the row is laid out, with the solemn protestation of intention to sleep. The wind, shifting, drives away the smoke. Good-night is said a hundred times; positions are re-adjusted, more last words, new shifting about, final remarks; it is all so comfortable and romantic; and then silence. Silence continues for a minute. The fire flashes up; all the row of heads is lifted up simultaneously to watch it; showers of sparks sail aloft into the blue night; the vast vault of greenery is a fairy spectacle. How the sparks mount and twinkle and disappear like tropical fire-flies, and all the leaves murmur, and clap their hands! Some of the sparks do not go out: we see them flaming in the sky when the flame of the fire has died down. Well, good-night, good-night. More folding of the arms to sleep; more grumbling about the hardness of a hand-bag, or the insufficiency of a pocket-handkerchief, for a pillow. Good-night. Was that a remark? — something about a root, a stub in the ground sticking into the back. "You could n't lie along a hair?" — "Well, no: here 's another stub." It needs but a moment for the conversation to become general, — about roots under the shoulder, stubs in the back, a

ridge on which it is impossible for the sleeper to balance, the non-elasticity of boughs, the hardness of the ground, the heat, the smoke, the chilly air. Subjects of remarks multiply. The whole camp is awake, and chattering like an aviary. The owl is also awake; but the guides who are asleep outside make more noise than the owls. Water is wanted, and is handed about in a dipper. Everybody is yawning; everybody is now determined to go to sleep in good earnest. A last good-night. There is an appalling silence. It is interrupted in the most natural way in the world. Somebody has got the start, and gone to sleep. He proclaims the fact. He seems to have been brought up on the seashore, and to know how to make all the deep-toned noises of the restless ocean. He is also like a war-horse; or, it is suggested, like a saw-horse. How malignantly he snorts, and breaks off short, and at once begins again in another key! One head is raised after another.

"Who is that?"

"Somebody punch him."

"Turn him over."

"Reason with him."

The sleeper is turned over. The turn was a mistake. He was before, it appears, on his most agreeable side. The camp rises in indignation. The sleeper sits up in bewilderment. Before he can go off again, two or three others have preceded him. They are all alike. You can never judge what a person is when he is awake. There are here half a dozen disturbers of the peace who should be put in solitary confinement. At midnight, when a philosopher crawls out to sit on a log by the fire, and smoke a pipe, a duet in tenor and mezzo-soprano is going on in the shanty,

with a chorus always coming in at the wrong time. Those who are not asleep want to know why the smoker does n't go to bed. He is requested to get some water, to throw on another log, to see what time it is, to note whether it looks like rain. A buzz of conversation arises. She is sure she heard something behind the shanty. He says it is all nonsense. "Perhaps, however, it might be a mouse."

"Mercy! Are there mice?"

"Plenty."

"Then that 's what I heard nibbling by my head. I sha'n't sleep a wink! Do they bite?"

"No, they nibble; scarcely ever take a full bite out."

"It 's horrid!"

Towards morning it grows chilly; the guides have let the fire go out; the blankets will slip down. Anxiety begins to be expressed about the dawn.

"What time does the sun rise?"

"Awful early. Did you sleep?"

"Not a wink. And you?"

"In spots. I 'm going to dig up this root as soon as it is light enough."

"See that mist on the lake, and the light just coming on the Gothics! I 'd no idea it was so cold: all the first part of the night I was roasted."

"What were they talking about all night?"

When the party crawls out to the early breakfast after it has washed its faces in the lake, it is disorganized, but cheerful. Nobody admits much sleep; but everybody is refreshed, and declares it delightful. It is the fresh air all night that invigorates; or maybe it is the tea or the slapjacks. The guides have erected a table of spruce bark, with benches at the sides; so

that breakfast is taken in form. It is served on tin plates and oak chips. After breakfast begins the day's work. It may be a mountain-climbing expedition, or rowing and angling in the lake, or fishing for trout in some stream two or three miles distant. Nobody can stir far from camp without a guide. Hammocks are swung, bowers are built, novel-reading begins, worsted work appears, cards are shuffled and dealt. The day passes in absolute freedom from responsibility to one's self. At night, when the expeditions return, the camp resumes its animation. Adventures are recounted, every statement of the narrator being disputed and argued. Everybody has become an adept in wood-craft; but nobody credits his neighbor with like instinct. Society getting resolved into its elements, confidence is gone.

Whilst the hilarious party are at supper, a drop or two of rain falls. The head guide is appealed to. Is it going to rain? He says it does rain. But will it be a rainy night? The guide goes down to the lake, looks at the sky, and concludes that if the wind shifts a p'int more, there is no telling what sort of weather we shall have. Meantime the drops patter thicker on the leaves overhead, and the leaves, in turn, pass the water down to the table; the sky darkens; the wind rises; there is a kind of shiver in the woods; and we scud away into the shanty, taking the remains of our supper, and eating it as best we can. The rain increases. The fire sputters and fumes. All the trees are dripping, dripping, and the ground is wet. We cannot step out-doors without getting a drenching. Like sheep, we are penned in the little hut, where no one can stand erect. The rain swirls into the open front, and wets the bottom of the blankets. The

smoke drives in. We curl up, and enjoy ourselves. The guides at length conclude that it is going to be damp. The dismal situation sets us all into good spirits; and it is later than the night before when we crawl under our blankets, sure this time of a sound sleep, lulled by the storm and the rain resounding on the bark roof. How much better off we are than many a shelterless wretch! We are as snug as dry herrings. At the moment, however, of dropping off to sleep, somebody unfortunately notes a drop of water on his face; this is followed by another drop; in an instant a stream is established. He moves his head to a dry place. Scarcely has he done so, when he feels a dampness in his back. Reaching his hand outside, he finds a puddle of water soaking through his blanket. By this time, somebody inquires if it is possible that the roof leaks. One man has a stream of water under him; another says it is coming into his ear. The roof appears to be a discriminating sieve. Those who are dry see no need of such a fuss. The man in the corner spreads his umbrella, and the protective measure is resented by his neighbor. In the darkness there is recrimination. One of the guides, who is summoned, suggests that the rubber blankets be passed out, and spread over the roof. The inmates dislike the proposal, saying that a shower-bath is no worse than a tub-bath. The rain continues to soak down. The fire is only half alive. The bedding is damp. Some sit up, if they can find a dry spot to sit on, and smoke. Heartless observations are made. A few sleep. And the night wears on. The morning opens cheerless. The sky is still leaking, and so is the shanty. The guides bring in a half-cooked breakfast. The roof is patched up. There

are reviving signs of breaking away, delusive signs that create momentary exhilaration. Even if the storm clears, the woods are soaked. There is no chance of stirring. The world is only ten feet square.

This life, without responsibility or clean clothes, may continue as long as the reader desires. There are those who would like to live in this free fashion forever, taking rain and sun as heaven pleases; and there are some souls so constituted that they cannot exist more than three days without their worldly baggage. Taking the party altogether, from one cause or another it is likely to strike camp sooner than was intended. And the stricken camp is a melancholy sight. The woods have been despoiled; the stumps are ugly; the bushes are scorched; the pine-leaf-strewn earth is trodden into mire; the landing looks like a cattle-ford; the ground is littered with all the unsightly *débris* of a hand-to-hand life; the dismantled shanty is a shabby object; the charred and blackened logs, where the fire blazed, suggest the extinction of family life. Man has wrought his usual wrong upon Nature, and he can save his self-respect only by moving to virgin forests.

And move to them he will, the next season, if not this. For he who has once experienced the fascination of the woods-life never escapes its enticement: in the memory nothing remains but its charm.

A WILDERNESS ROMANCE.

At the south end of Keene Valley, in the Adirondacks, stands Noon Mark, a shapely peak, thirty-five hundred feet above the sea, which, with the aid of the sun, tells the Keene people when it is time to eat dinner. From its summit you look south into a vast wilderness basin, a great stretch of forest little trodden, and out of whose bosom you can hear from the heights on a still day the loud murmur of Boquet. This basin of unbroken green rises away to the south and south-east into the rocky heights of Dix's Peak and Nipple Top, — the latter a local name which neither the mountain nor the fastidious tourist is able to shake off. Indeed, so long as the mountain keeps its present shape as seen from the southern lowlands, it cannot get on without this name.

These two mountains, which belong to the great system of which Marcy is the giant centre, and are in the neighborhood of five thousand feet high, on the southern outposts of the great mountains, form the gate-posts of the pass into the south country. This opening between them is called Hunter's Pass. It is the most elevated and one of the wildest of the mountain passes. Its summit is thirty-five hundred feet high. In former years it is presumed the hunters occasionally followed the game through ; but latterly it is rare to find a guide who has been that way, and the

tin-can and paper-collar tourists have not yet made it a runway. This seclusion is due not to any inherent difficulty of travel, but to the fact that it lies a little out of the way.

We went through it last summer; making our way into the jaws from the foot of the great slides on Dix, keeping along the ragged spurs of the mountain through the virgin forest. The pass is narrow, walled in on each side by precipices of granite, and blocked up with the bowlders and fallen trees, and beset with pitfalls in the roads ingeniously covered with fair-seeming moss. When the climber occasionally loses sight of a leg in one of those treacherous holes, and feels a cold sensation in his foot, he learns that he has dipped into the sources of the Boquet, which emerges lower down into falls and rapids, and, recruited by creeping tributaries, goes brawling through the forest basin, and at last comes out an amiable and boat-bearing stream in the valley of Elizabeth Town. From the summit another rivulet trickles away to the south, and finds its way through a frightful tamarack swamp, and through woods scarred by ruthless lumbering, to Mud Pond, a quiet body of water, with a ghastly fringe of dead trees, upon which people of grand intentions and weak vocabulary are trying to fix the name of Elk Lake. The descent of the pass on that side is precipitous and exciting. The way is in the stream itself; and a considerable portion of the distance we swung ourselves down the faces of considerable falls, and tumbled down cascades. The descent, however, was made easy by the fact that it rained, and every footstep was yielding and slippery. Why sane people, often church-members respectably connected, will subject themselves to this sort of treat-

ment, — be wet to the skin, bruised by the rocks, and flung about among the bushes and dead wood until the most necessary part of their apparel hangs in shreds, — is one of the delightful mysteries of these woods. I suspect that every man is at heart a roving animal, and likes, at intervals, to revert to the condition of the bear and the catamount.

There is no trail through Hunter's Pass, which, as I have intimated, is the least frequented portion of this wilderness. Yet we were surprised to find a well-beaten path a considerable portion of the way and wherever a path is possible. It was not a mere deer's runway: these are found everywhere in the mountains. It is trodden by other and larger animals, and is, no doubt, the highway of beasts. It bears marks of having been so for a long period, and probably a period long ago. Large animals are not common in these woods now, and you seldom meet any thing fiercer than the timid deer and the gentle bear. But in days gone by Hunter's Pass was the highway of the whole caravan of animals who were continually going backwards and forwards, in the aimless, roaming way that beasts have, between Mud Pond and the Boquet Basin. I think I can see now the procession of them between the heights of Dix and Nipple Top; the elk and the moose shambling along, cropping the twigs; the heavy bear lounging by with his exploring nose; the frightened deer trembling at every twig that snapped beneath his little hoofs, intent on the lily-pads of the pond; the raccoon and the hedgehog, sidling along; and the velvet-footed panther, *insouciant* and conscienceless, scenting the path with a curious glow in his eye, or crouching in an overhanging tree ready to drop into the procession at

the right moment. Night and day, year after year, I see them going by, watched by the red fox and the comfortably clad sable, and grinned at by the black cat, — the innocent, the vicious, the timid and the savage, the shy and the bold, the chattering slanderer and the screaming prowler, the industrious and the peaceful, the tree-top critic and the crawling biter, — just as it is elsewhere. It makes me blush for my species when I think of it. This charming society is nearly extinct now: of the larger animals there only remain the bear, who minds his own business more thoroughly than any person I know, and the deer, who would like to be friendly with men, but whose winning face and gentle ways are no protection from the savageness of man, and who is treated with the same unpitying destruction as the snarling catamount. I have read in history that the amiable natives of Hispaniola fared no better at the hands of the brutal Spaniards than the fierce and warlike Caribs. As society is at present constituted in Christian countries, I would rather for my own security be a cougar than a fawn.

There is not much of romantic interest in the Adirondacks. Out of the books of daring travellers, nothing. I do not know that the Keene Valley has any history. The mountains always stood here, and the Ausable, flowing now in shallows and now in rippling reaches over the sands and pebbles, has for ages filled the air with continuous and soothing sounds. Before the Vermonters broke into it some three-quarters of a century ago, and made meadows of its bottoms and sugar-camps of its fringing woods, I suppose the red Indian lived here in his usual discomfort, and was as restless as his successors, the summer

boarders. But the streams were full of trout then, and the moose and the elk left their broad tracks on the sands of the river. But of the Indian there is no trace. There is a mound in the valley, much like a Tel in the country of Bashan beyond the Jordan, that may have been built by some prehistoric race, and may contain treasure and the seated figure of a preserved chieftain on his slow way to Paradise. What the gentle and accomplished race of the Mound-Builders should want in this savage region, where the frost kills the early potatoes and stunts the scanty oats, I do not know. I have seen no trace of *them*, except this Tel, and one other slight relic, which came to light last summer, and is not enough to found the history of a race upon.

Some workingmen, getting stone from the hillside on one of the little plateaus for a house-cellar, discovered, partly embedded, a piece of pottery unique in this region. With the unerring instinct of workmen in regard to antiquities, they thrust a crowbar through it, and broke the bowl into several pieces. The joint fragments, however, give us the form of a dish. It is a bowl about nine inches high and eight inches across, made of red clay, baked but not glazed. The bottom is round, the top flares into four corners, and the rim is rudely but rather artistically ornamented with criss-cross scratches made when the clay was soft. The vessel is made of clay not found about here, and it is one that the Indians formerly living here could not form. Was it brought here by roving Indians who may have made an expedition to the Ohio; was it passed from tribe to tribe; or did it belong to a race that occupied the country before the Indian, and who have left traces of their civilized skill in pottery scattered all over the continent?

If I could establish the fact that this jar was made by a prehistoric race, we should then have four generations in this lovely valley: the amiable Prehistoric people (whose gentle descendants were probably killed by the Spaniards in the West Indies); the Red Indians; the Keene Flaters (from Vermont); and the Summer Boarders, to say nothing of the various races of animals who have been unable to live here since the advent of the Summer Boarders, the valley being not productive enough to sustain both. This last incursion has been more destructive to the noble serenity of the forest than all the preceding.

But we are wandering from Hunter's Pass. The western walls of it are formed by the precipices of Nipple Top, not so striking nor so bare as the great slides of Dix, which glisten in the sun like silver, but rough and repelling, and consequently alluring. I have a great desire to scale them. I have always had an unreasonable wish to explore the rough summit of this crabbed hill, which is too broken and jagged for pleasure, and not high enough for glory. This desire was stimulated by a legend related by our guide that night in the Mud Pond cabin. The guide had never been through the pass before; although he was familiar with the region, and had ascended Nipple Top in the winter in pursuit of the sable. The story he told does n't amount to much,— none of the guides' stories do, faithfully reported, — and I should not have believed it if I had not had a good deal of leisure on my hands at the time, and been of a willing mind, and I may say in rather a starved condition as to any romance in this region.

The guide said then — and he mentioned it casually, in reply to our inquiries about ascending the

mountain — that there was a cave high up among the precipices on the southeast side of Nipple Top. He scarcely volunteered the information, and with seeming reluctance gave us any particulars about it. I always admire this art by which the accomplished story-teller lets his listener drag the reluctant tale of the marvellous from him, and makes you in a manner responsible for its improbability. If this is well-managed, the listener is always eager to believe a great deal more than the romancer seems willing to tell, and always resents the assumed reservations and doubts of the latter.

There were strange reports about this cave when the old guide was a boy, and even then its very existence had become legendary. Nobody knew exactly where it was, but there was no doubt that it had been inhabited. Hunters in the forests south of Dix had seen a light late at night twinkling through the trees high up the mountain, and now and then a ruddy glare as from the flaring-up of a furnace. Settlers were few in the wilderness then, and all the inhabitants were well known. If the cave was inhabited, it must be by strangers, and by men who had some secret purpose in seeking this seclusion and eluding observation. If suspicious characters were seen about Port Henry, or if any such landed from the steamers on the shore of Lake Champlain, it was impossible to identify them with these invaders who were never seen. Their not being seen did not, however, prevent the growth of the belief in their existence. Little indications and rumors, each trivial in itself, became a mass of testimony that could not be disposed of because of its very indefiniteness, but which appealed strongly to man's noblest faculty, his imagination, or credulity.

The cave existed; and it was inhabited by men who came and went on mysterious errands, and transacted their business by night. What this band of adventurers or desperadoes lived on, how they conveyed their food through the trackless woods to their high eyrie, and what could induce men to seek such a retreat, were questions discussed, but never settled. They might be banditti; but there was nothing to plunder in these savage wilds, and, in fact, robberies and raids, either in the settlements of the hills or the distant lake shores were unknown. In another age, these might have been hermits, holy men who had retired from the world to feed the vanity of their godliness in a spot where they were subject neither to interruption nor comparison; they would have had a shrine in the cave, and an image of the Blessed Virgin, with a lamp always burning before it and sending out its mellow light over the savage waste. A more probable notion was that they were romantic Frenchmen who had grown weary of vice and refinement together, — possibly princes, expectants of the throne, Bourbon remainders, named Williams or otherwise, unhatched eggs, so to speak, of kings, who had withdrawn out of observation to wait for the next turn-over in Paris. Frenchmen do such things. If they were not Frenchmen, they might be horse-thieves or criminals, escaped from justice or from the friendly state-prison of New York. This last supposition was, however, more violent than the others, or seems so to us in this day of grace. For what well-brought-up New York criminal would be so insane as to run away from his political friends the keepers, from the easily-had companionship of his pals outside, and from the society of his criminal lawyer, and, in short, to put

himself into the depths of a wilderness out of which escape, when escape was desired, is a good deal more difficult than it is out of the swarming jails of the Empire State? Besides, how foolish for a man, if he were a really hardened and professional criminal, having established connections and a regular business, to run away from the governor's pardon, which might have difficulty in finding him in the craggy bosom of Nipple Top!

This gang of men — there is some doubt whether they were accompanied by women — gave little evidence in their appearance of being escaped criminals or expectant kings. Their movements were mysterious, but not necessarily violent. If their occupation could have been discovered, that would have furnished a clue to their true character. But about this the strangers were as close as mice. If anything could betray them, it was the steady light from the cavern, and its occasional ruddy flashing. This gave rise to the opinion, which was strengthened by a good many indications equally conclusive, that the cave was the resort of a gang of coiners and counterfeiters. Here they had their furnace, smelting-pots, and dies; here they manufactured those spurious quarters and halves that their confidants, who were pardoned, were circulating, and which a few honest men were "nailing to the counter."

This prosaic explanation of a romantic situation satisfies all the requirements of the known facts, but the lively imagination at once rejects it as unworthy of the subject. I think the guide put it forward in order to have it rejected. The fact is, — at least, it has never been disproved, — these strangers whose movements were veiled belonged to that dark and

mysterious race whose presence anywhere on this continent is a nest-egg of romance or of terror. They were *Spaniards!* You need not say buccaneers, you need not say gold-hunters, you need not say swarthy adventurers even: it is enough to say Spaniards! There is no tale of mystery and fanaticism and daring I would not believe if a Spaniard is the hero of it, and it is not necessary either that he should have the high-sounding name of Bobadilla or Ojeda.

Nobody, I suppose, would doubt this story, if the cave were in the mountains of Hispaniola or in the Florida Keys. But a Spaniard in the Adirondacks does seem misplaced. Well, there would be no romance about it if he were not misplaced. The Spaniard, anywhere out of Spain, has always been misplaced. What could draw him to this loggy and remote region? There are two substances that will draw a Spaniard from any distance as certainly as sugar will draw wasps, — gold and silver. Does the reader begin to see light? There was a rumor that silver existed in these mountains. I do not know where the rumor came from, but it is necessary to account for the Spaniards in the cave.

How long these greedy Spaniards occupied the cave on Nipple Top is not known, nor how much silver they found, whether they found any, or whether they secretly took away all there was in the hills. That they discovered silver in considerable quantities is a fair inference from the length of their residence in this mountain, and the extreme care they took to guard their secret, and the mystery that enveloped all their movements. What they mined, they smelted in the cave and carried off with them.

To my imagination nothing is more impressive than

the presence in these savage wilds of these polished foreigners and accomplished metallurgists, far from the haunts of civilized man, leading a life of luxury and revelry in this almost inaccessible cavern. I can see them seated about their roaring fire, which revealed the rocky ribs of their den and sent a gleam over the dark forest, eating venison-pasty and cutting deep into the juicy haunch of the moose, quaffing deep draughts of red wine from silver tankards, and then throwing themselves back upon divans, and lazily puffing the fragrant Havana. After a day of toil, what more natural, and what more probable for a Spaniard?

Does the reader think these inferences not warranted by the facts? He does not know the facts. It is true that our guide had never himself personally visited the cave, but he has always intended to hunt it up. His information in regard to it comes from his father, who was a mighty hunter and trapper. In one of his expeditions over Nipple Top, he chanced upon the cave. The mouth was half concealed by undergrowth. He entered, not without some apprehension engendered by the legends which make it famous. I think he showed some boldness in venturing into such a place alone. I confess, that, before I went in, I should want to fire a Gatling gun into the mouth for a little while, in order to rout out the bears which usually dwell there. He went in, however. The entrance was low; but the cave was spacious, not large, but big enough, with a level floor and a vaulted ceiling. It had long been deserted, but that it was once the residence of highly civilized beings there could be no doubt. The dead brands in the centre were the remains of a fire that could not have been kindled by wild beasts, and the bones scattered about had been

scientifically dissected and handled. There were also remnants of furniture and pieces of garments scattered about. At the further end, in a fissure of the rock, were stones regularly built up, the remains of a larger fire, — and what the hunter did not doubt was the smelting-furnace of the Spaniards. He poked about in the ashes, but found no silver. *That* had all been carried away.

But what most provoked his wonder in this rude cave was a chair! This was not such a seat as a woodman might knock up with an axe, with a rough body and a seat of woven splits, but a manufactured chair of commerce, and a chair, too, of an unusual pattern and some elegance. This chair itself was a mute witness of luxury and mystery. The chair itself might have been accounted for, though I don't know how: but upon the back of the chair hung, as if the owner had carelessly flung it there before going out an hour before, a man's waistcoat. This waistcoat seemed to him of foreign make and peculiar style, but what endeared it to him was its row of metal buttons. These buttons were of silver! I forget now whether he did not say they were of silver coin, and that the coin was Spanish. But I am not certain about this latter fact, and I wish to cast no air of improbability over my narrative. This rich vestment the hunter carried away with him. This was all the plunder his expedition afforded. Yes: there was one other article, and, to my mind, more significant than the vest of the *hidalgo*. That was a short and stout crowbar of iron; not one of the long crowbars that farmers use to pry up stones, but a short handy one, such as you would use in digging silver-ore out of the cracks of rocks.

This was the guide's simple story. I asked him what became of the vest and buttons, and the bar of iron. The old man wore the vest until he wore it out; and then he handed it over to the boys, and they wore it in turn till they wore it out. The buttons were cut off, and kept as curiosities. They were about the cabin, and the children had them to play with. The guide distinctly remembers playing with them; one of them he kept for a long time, and he did n't know but he could find it now, but he guessed it had disappeared. I regretted that he had not treasured this slender verification of an interesting romance, but he said in those days he never paid much attention to such things. Lately he has turned the subject over, and is sorry that his father wore out the vest and did not bring away the chair. It is his steady purpose to find the cave some time when he has leisure, and capture the chair, if it has not tumbled to pieces. But about the crowbar? Oh! that is all right. The guide has the bar at his house in Keene Valley, and has always used it.

I am happy to be able to confirm this story by saying that next day I saw the crowbar, and had it in my hand. It is short and thick, and the most interesting kind of crowbar. This evidence is enough for me. I intend in the course of this vacation to search for the cave; and, if I find it, my readers shall know the truth about it, if it destroys the only bit of romance connected with these mountains.

WHAT SOME PEOPLE CALL PLEASURE

My readers were promised an account of Spaniard's Cave on Nipple-Top Mountain in the Adirondacks, if such a cave exists, and could be found. There is none but negative evidence that this is a mere cave of the imagination, the void fancy of a vacant hour; but it is the duty of the historian to present the negative testimony of a fruitless expedition in search of it, made last summer. I beg leave to offer this in the simple language befitting all sincere exploits of a geographical character.

The summit of Nipple-Top Mountain has been trodden by few white men of good character: it is in the heart of a hirsute wilderness; it is itself a rough and unsocial pile of granite nearly five thousand feet high, bristling with a stunted and unpleasant growth of firs and balsams, and there is no earthly reason why a person should go there. Therefore we went. In the party of three there was, of course, a chaplain. The guide was Old Mountain Phelps, who had made the ascent once before, but not from the northwest side, the direction from which we approached it. The enthusiasm of this philosopher has grown with his years, and outlived his endurance: we carried our own knapsacks and supplies, therefore, and drew upon him for nothing but moral reflections and a general knowledge of the wilderness. Our first day's route

was through the Gill-Brook woods and up one of its branches to the head of Caribou Pass, which separates Nipple-Top from Colvin.

It was about the first of September; no rain had fallen for several weeks, and this heart of the forest was as dry as tinder; a lighted match dropped anywhere would start a conflagration. This dryness has its advantages: the walking is improved; the long heat has expressed all the spicy odors of the cedars and balsams, and the woods are filled with a soothing fragrance; the waters of the streams, though scant and clear, are cold as ice; the common forest chill is gone from the air. The afternoon was bright; there was a feeling of exultation and adventure in stepping off into the open but pathless forest; the great stems of deciduous trees were mottled with patches of sunlight, which brought out upon the variegated barks and mosses of the old trunks a thousand shifting hues. There is nothing like a primeval wood for color on a sunny day. The shades of green and brown are infinite; the dull red of the hemlock bark glows in the sun, the russet of the changing moose-bush becomes brilliant; there are silvery openings here and there; and everywhere the columns rise up to the canopy of tender green which supports the intense blue sky and holds up a part of it from falling through in fragments to the floor of the forest. Decorators can learn here how Nature dares to put blue and green in juxtaposition: she has evidently the secret of harmonizing all the colors.

The way, as we ascended, was not all through open woods; dense masses of firs were encountered, jagged spurs were to be crossed, and the going became at length so slow and toilsome that we took to the rocky

bed of a stream, where bowlders and flumes and cascades offered us sufficient variety. The deeper we penetrated, the greater the sense of savageness and solitude; in the silence of these hidden places one seems to approach the beginning of things. We emerged from the defile into an open basin, formed by the curved side of the mountain, and stood silent before a waterfall coming down out of the sky in the centre of the curve. I do not know anything exactly like this fall, which some poetical explorer has named the Fairy-Ladder Falls. It appears to have a height of something like a hundred and fifty feet, and the water falls obliquely across the face of the cliff from left to right in short steps, which in the moonlight might seem like a veritable ladder for fairies. Our impression of its height was confirmed by climbing the very steep slope at its side some three or four hundred feet. At the top we found the stream flowing over a broad bed of rock, like a street in the wilderness, slanting up still towards the sky, and bordered by low firs and balsams, and bowlders completely covered with moss. It was above the world and open to the sky.

On account of the tindery condition of the woods we made our fire on the natural pavement, and selected a smooth place for our bed near by on a flat rock, with a pool of limpid water at the foot. This granite couch we covered with the dry and springy moss, which we stripped off in heavy fleeces a foot thick from the bowlders. First, however, we fed upon the fruit that was offered us. Over these hills of moss ran an exquisite vine with a tiny, ovate, green leaf, bearing small, delicate berries, oblong and white as wax, having a faint flavor of wintergreen and the

slightest acid taste, the very essence of the wilderness; fairy food, no doubt, and too refined for palates accustomed to coarser viands. There must exist somewhere sinless women who could eat these berries without being reminded of the lost purity and delicacy of the primeval senses. Every year I doubt not this stainless berry ripens here, and is unplucked by any knight of the Holy Grail who is worthy to eat it, and keeps alive, in the prodigality of nature, the tradition of the unperverted conditions of taste before the fall. We ate these berries, I am bound to say, with a sense of guilty enjoyment, as if they had been a sort of shew-bread of the wilderness, though I cannot answer for the chaplain, who is by virtue of his office a little nearer to these mysteries of nature than I. This plant belongs to the heath family, and is first cousin to the blueberry and cranberry. It is commonly called the creeping snowberry, but I like better its official title of *chiogenes*,— the snow-born.

Our mossy resting-place was named the Bridal Chamber Camp, in the enthusiasm of the hour, after darkness fell upon the woods and the stars came out. We were two thousand five hundred feet above the common world. We lay, as it were, on a shelf in the sky, with a basin of illimitable forests below us and dim mountain-passes in the far horizon.

And as we lay there courting sleep which the blinking stars refused to shower down, our philosopher discoursed to us of the principle of fire, which he holds, with the ancients, to be an independent element that comes and goes in a mysterious manner, as we see flame spring up and vanish, and is in some way vital and indestructible, and has a mysterious relation to the source of all things. "That flame," he says,

"you have put out, but where has it gone?" We could not say, nor whether it is anything like the spirit of a man which is here for a little hour, and then vanishes away. Our own philosophy of the correlation of forces found no sort of favor at that elevation, and we went to sleep leaving the principle of fire in the apostolic category of "any other creature."

At daylight we were astir, and having pressed the principle of fire into our service to make a pot of tea, we carefully extinguished it or sent it into another place, and addressed ourselves to the climb of something over two thousand feet. The arduous labor of scaling an Alpine peak has a compensating glory; but the dead lift of our bodies up Nipple-Top had no stimulus of this sort. It is simply hard work, for which the strained muscles only get the approbation of the individual conscience that drives them to the task. The pleasure of such an ascent is difficult to explain on the spot, and I suspect consists not so much in positive enjoyment as in the delight the mind experiences in tyrannizing over the body. I do not object to the elevation of this mountain, nor to the uncommonly steep grade by which it attains it, but only to the other obstacles thrown in the way of the climber. All the slopes of Nipple-Top are hirsute and jagged to the last degree. Granite ledges interpose; granite bowlders seem to have been dumped over the sides with no more attempt at arrangement than in a rip-rap wall; the slashes and windfalls of a century present here and there an almost impenetrable *chevalier des arbres;* and the steep sides bristle with a mass of thick balsams, with dead, protruding spikes, as unyielding as iron stakes. The mountain has had its own way forever, and is as untamed as a

wolf; or rather the elements, the frightful tempests, the frosts, the heavy snows, the coaxing sun, and the avalanches have had their way with it until its surface is in hopeless confusion. We made our way very slowly; and it was ten o'clock before we reached what appeared to be the summit, a ridge deeply covered with moss, low balsams, and blueberry bushes.

I say, appeared to be; for we stood in thick fog or in the heart of clouds which limited our dim view to a radius of twenty feet. It was a warm and cheerful fog, stirred by little wind, but moving, shifting, and boiling as by its own volatile nature, rolling up black from below and dancing in silvery splendor overhead. As a fog it could not have been improved; as a medium for viewing the landscape it was a failure; and we lay down upon the Sybarite couch of moss, as in a Russian bath, to await revelations.

We waited two hours without change, except an occasional hopeful lightness in the fog above, and at last the appearance for a moment of the spectral sun. Only for an instant was this luminous promise vouchsafed. But we watched in intense excitement. There it was again; and this time the fog was so thin overhead that we caught sight of a patch of blue sky a yard square, across which the curtain was instantly drawn. A little wind was stirring, and the fog boiled up from the valley caldrons thicker than ever. But the spell was broken. In a moment more Old Phelps was shouting, "The sun!" and before we could gain our feet there was a patch of sky overhead as big as a farm. "See! quick!" The old man was dancing like a lunatic. There was a rift in the vapor at our feet, down, down, three thousand feet into the forest abyss, and lo! lifting out of it yonder

the tawny side of Dix, — the vision of a second, snatched away in the rolling fog. The play had just begun. Before we could turn, there was the gorge of Caribou Pass, savage and dark, visible to the bottom. The opening shut as suddenly; and then, looking over the clouds, miles away we saw the peaceful farms of the Ausable Valley, and in a moment more the plateau of North Elba and the sentinel mountains about the grave of John Brown. These glimpses were as fleeting as thought, and instantly we were again isolated in the sea of mist. The expectation of these sudden strokes of sublimity kept us exultingly on the alert; and yet it was a blow of surprise when the curtain was swiftly withdrawn on the west, and the long ridge of Colvin, seemingly within a stone's throw, heaved up like an island out of the ocean, and was the next moment ingulfed. We waited longer for Dix to show its shapely peak and its glistening sides of rock gashed by avalanches. The fantastic clouds, torn and streaming, hurried up from the south in haste, as if to a witch's rendezvous, hiding and disclosing the great summit in their flight. The mist boiled up from the valley, whirled over the summit where we stood, and plunged again into the depths. Objects were forming and disappearing, shifting and dancing, now in sun and now gone in fog, and in the elemental whirl we felt that we were "assisting" in an original process of creation. The sun strove, and his very striving called up new vapors; the wind rent away the clouds, and brought new masses to surge about us; and the spectacles to right and left, above and below, changed with incredible swiftness. Such glory of abyss and summit, of color and form and transformation, is seldom granted to mortal eyes.

For an hour we watched it until our vast mountain was revealed in all its bulk, its long spurs, its abysses and its savagery, and the great basins of wilderness with their shining lakes, and the giant peaks of the region, were one by one disclosed, and hidden and again tranquil in the sunshine.

Where was the cave? There was ample surface in which to look for it. If we could have flitted about, like the hawks that came circling round, over the steep slopes, the long spurs, the jagged precipices, I have no doubt we should have found it. But moving about on this mountain is not a holiday pastime; and we were chiefly anxious to discover a practicable mode of descent into the great wilderness basin on the south, which we must traverse that afternoon before reaching the hospitable shanty on Mud Pond. It was enough for us to have discovered the general whereabouts of the Spanish Cave, and we left the fixing of its exact position to future explorers.

The spur we chose for our escape looked smooth in the distance; but we found it bristling with obstructions, dead balsams set thickly together, slashes of fallen timber, and every manner of woody chaos; and when at length we swung and tumbled off the ledge to the general slope, we exchanged only for more disagreeable going. The slope for a couple of thousand feet was steep enough; but it was formed of granite rocks all moss-covered, so that the footing could not be determined, and at short intervals we nearly went out of sight in holes under the treacherous carpeting. Add to this that stems of great trees were laid longitudinally and transversely and criss-cross over and among the rocks, and the reader can see that a good deal of work needs to be done to make this a practicable highway for anything but a squirrel.

We had had no water since our daylight breakfast; our lunch on the mountain had been moistened only by the fog. Our thirst began to be that of Tantalus, because we could hear the water running deep down among the rocks, but we could not come at it. The imagination drank the living stream, and we realized anew what delusive food the imagination furnishes in an actual strait. A good deal of the crime of this world, I am convinced, is the direct result of the unlicensed play of the imagination in adverse circumstances. This reflection had nothing to do with our actual situation; for we added to our imagination patience, and to our patience long-suffering, and probably all the Christian virtues would have been developed in us if the descent had been long enough. Before we reached the bottom of Caribou Pass, the water burst out from the rocks in a clear stream that was as cold as ice. Shortly after, we struck the roaring brook that issues from the Pass to the south. It is a stream full of character, not navigable even for trout in the upper part, but a succession of falls, cascades, flumes, and pools, that would delight an artist. It is not an easy bed for anything except water to descend; and before we reached the level reaches, where the stream flows with a murmurous noise through open woods, one of our party began to show signs of exhaustion.

This was Old Phelps, whose appetite had failed the day before, — his imagination being in better working order than his stomach: he had eaten little that day, and his legs became so groggy that he was obliged to rest at short intervals. Here was a situation! The afternoon was wearing away. We had six or seven miles of unknown wilderness to traverse, a portion of

it swampy, in which a progress of more than a mile an hour is difficult, and the condition of the guide compelled even a slower march. What should we do in that lonesome solitude if the guide became disabled? We could n't carry him out; could we find our own way out to get assistance? The guide himself had never been there before; and although he knew the general direction of our point of egress, and was entirely adequate to extricate himself from any position in the woods, his knowledge was of that occult sort possessed by woodsmen which it is impossible to communicate. Our object was to strike a trail that led from the Au Sable Pond, the other side of the mountain range, to an inlet on Mud Pond. We knew that if we travelled southwestward far enough we must strike that trail, but how far? No one could tell. If we reached that trail, and found a boat at the inlet, there would be only a row of a couple of miles to the house at the foot of the lake. If no boat was there, then we must circle the lake three or four miles farther through a cedar-swamp, with no trail in particular. The prospect was not pleasing. We were short of supplies, for we had not expected to pass that night in the woods. The pleasure of the excursion began to develop itself.

We stumbled on in the general direction marked out, through a forest that began to seem endless as hour after hour passed, compelled as we were to make long detours over the ridges of the foot-hills to avoid the swamp, which sent out from the border of the lake long tongues into the firm ground. The guide became more ill at every step, and needed frequent halts and long rests. Food he could not eat; and tea, water, and even brandy, he rejected. Again and again the

old philosopher, enfeebled by excessive exertion and illness, would collapse in a heap on the ground, an almost comical picture of despair, while we stood and waited the waning of the day, and peered forward in vain for any sign of an open country. At every brook we encountered, we suggested a halt for the night, while it was still light enough to select a camping-place, but the plucky old man would n't hear of it: the trail might be only a quarter of a mile ahead, and we crawled on again at a snail's pace. His honor as a guide seemed to be at stake; and, besides, he confessed to a notion that his end was near, and he did n't want to die like a dog in the woods. And yet, if this was his last journey, it seemed not an inappropriate ending for the old woodsman to lie down and give up the ghost in the midst of the untamed forest and the solemn silences he felt most at home in. There is a popular theory, held by civilians, that a soldier likes to die in battle. I suppose it is as true that a woodsman would like to "pass in his chips," — the figure seems to be inevitable, — struck down by illness and exposure, in the forest solitude, with heaven in sight and a tree-root for his pillow.

The guide seemed really to fear that, if we did not get out of the woods that night, he would never go out; and, yielding to his dogged resolution, we kept on in search of the trail, although the gathering of dusk over the ground warned us that we might easily cross the trail without recognizing it. We were travelling by the light in the upper sky, and by the forms of the tree-stems, which every moment grew dimmer. At last the end came. We had just felt our way over what seemed to be a little run of water, when the old man sunk down, remarking, "I might as well die here as anywhere," and was silent.

Suddenly night fell like a blanket on us. We could neither see the guide nor each other. We became at once conscious that miles of night on all sides shut us in. The sky was clouded over: there was n't a gleam of light to show us where to step. Our first thought was to build a fire, which would drive back the thick darkness into the woods, and boil some water for our tea. But it was too dark to use the axe. We scraped together leaves and twigs to make a blaze, and, as this failed, such dead sticks as we could find by groping about. The fire was only a temporary affair, but it sufficed to boil a can of water. The water we obtained by feeling about the stones of the little run for an opening big enough to dip our cup in. The supper to be prepared was fortunately simple. It consisted of a decoction of tea and other leaves which had got into the pail, and a part of a loaf of bread. A loaf of bread which has been carried in a knapsack for a couple of days, bruised and handled and hacked at with a hunting-knife, becomes an uninteresting object. But we ate of it with thankfulness, washed it down with hot fluid, and bitterly thought of the morrow. Would our old friend survive the night? Would he be in any condition to travel in the morning? How were we to get out with him or without him?

The old man lay silent in the bushes out of sight, and desired only to be let alone. We tried to tempt him with the offer of a piece of toast: it was no temptation. Tea, we thought, would revive him: he refused it. A drink of brandy would certainly quicken his life: he could n't touch it. We were at the end of our resources. He seemed to think, that, if he were at home, and could get a bit of fried bacon, or a piece

of pie, he should be all right. We knew no more how to doctor him than if he had been a sick bear. He withdrew within himself, rolled himself up, so to speak, in his primitive habits, and waited for the healing power of nature. Before our feeble fire disappeared, we smoothed a level place near it for Phelps to lie on, and got him over to it. But it did n't suit: it was too open. In fact, at the moment some drops of rain fell. Rain was quite outside of our programme for the night. But the guide had an instinct about it; and, while we were groping about some yards distant for a place where we could lie down, he crawled away into the darkness, and curled himself up amid the roots of a gigantic pine, very much as a bear would do, I suppose, with his back against the trunk, and there passed the night comparatively dry and comfortable; but of this we knew nothing until morning, and had to trust to the assurance of a voice out of the darkness that he was all right.

Our own bed where we spread our blankets was excellent in one respect, — there was no danger of tumbling out of it. At first the rain pattered gently on the leaves overhead, and we congratulated ourselves on the snugness of our situation. There was something cheerful about this free life. We contrasted our condition with that of tired invalids who were tossing on downy beds, and wooing sleep in vain. Nothing was so wholesome and invigorating as this bivouac in the forest. But, somehow, sleep did not come. The rain had ceased to patter, and began to fall with a steady determination, a sort of soak, soak, all about us. In fact, it roared on the rubber blanket, and beat in our faces. The wind began to stir a little, and there was a moaning on high. Not con-

tented with dripping, the rain was driven into our faces. Another suspicious circumstance was noticed. Little rills of water got established along the sides under the blankets, cold, undeniable streams, that interfered with drowsiness. Pools of water settled on the bed; and the chaplain had a habit of moving suddenly, and letting a quart or two inside, and down my neck. It began to be evident that we and our bed were probably the wettest objects in the woods. The rubber was an excellent catch-all. There was no trouble about ventilation, but we found that we had established our quarters without any provision for drainage. There was not exactly a wild tempest abroad; but there was a degree of liveliness in the thrashing limbs and the creaking of the tree-branches which rubbed against each other, and the pouring rain increased in volume and power of penetration. Sleep was quite out of the question, with so much to distract our attention. In fine, our misery became so perfect that we both broke out into loud and sarcastic laughter over the absurdity of our situation. We had subjected ourselves to all this forlornness simply for pleasure. Whether Old Phelps was still in existence, we could n't tell: we could get no response from him. With daylight, if he continued ill and could not move, our situation would be little improved. Our supplies were gone, we lay in a pond, a deluge of water was pouring down on us. This was summer recreation. The whole thing was so excessively absurd, that we laughed again, louder than ever. We had plenty of this sort of amusement.

Suddenly through the night we heard a sort of reply that started us bolt upright. This was a pro-

longed *squawk*. It was like the voice of no beast or bird with which we were familiar. At first it was distant, but it rapidly approached, tearing through the night and apparently through the tree-tops, like the harsh cry of a web-footed bird with a snarl in it; in fact, as I said, a squawk. It came close to us, and then turned, and as rapidly as it came, fled away through the forest, and we lost the unearthly noise far up the mountain-slope.

"What was *that*, Phelps?" we cried out. But no response came; and we wondered if his spirit had been rent away, or if some evil genius had sought it, and then, baffled by his serene and philosophic spirit, had shot off into the void in rage and disappointment.

The night had no other adventure. The moon at length coming up behind the clouds lent a spectral aspect to the forest, and deceived us for a time into the notion that day was at hand; but the rain never ceased, and we lay wishful and waiting, with no item of solid misery wanting that we could conceive.

Day was slow a-coming, and did n't amount to much when it came, so heavy were the clouds; but the rain slackened. We crawled out of our water-cure "pack," and sought the guide. To our infinite relief he announced himself not only alive, but in a going condition. I looked at my watch. It had stopped at five o'clock. I poured the water out of it, and shook it: but, not being constructed on the hydraulic principle, it refused to go. Some hours later we encountered a huntsman, from whom I procured some gun-grease; with this I filled the watch, and heated it in by the fire. This is the most effectual way of treating a delicate Genevan timepiece.

The light disclosed fully the suspected fact that our

bed had been made in a slight depression: the under rubber blanket spread in this had prevented the rain from soaking into the ground, and we had been lying in what was in fact a well-contrived bath-tub. While Old Phelps was pulling himself together, and we were wringing some gallons of water out of our blankets, we questioned the old man about the "squawk," and what bird was possessed of such a voice. It was not a bird at all, he said, but a cat, the black-cat of the woods, larger than the domestic animal, and an ugly customer, who is fond of fish, and carries a pelt that is worth two or three dollars in the market. Occasionally he blunders into a sable-trap; and he is altogether hateful in his ways, and has the most uncultivated voice that is heard in the woods. We shall remember him as one of the least pleasant phantoms of that cheerful night when we lay in the storm, fearing any moment the advent to one of us of the grimmest messenger.

We rolled up and shouldered our wet belongings, and, before the shades had yet lifted from the saturated bushes, pursued our march. It was a relief to be again in motion, although our progress was slow, and it was a question every rod whether the guide could go on. We had the day before us; but if we did not find a boat at the inlet a day might not suffice, in the weak condition of the guide, to extricate us from our ridiculous position. There was nothing heroic in it; we had no object; it was merely, as it must appear by this time, a pleasure excursion, and we might be lost or perish in it without reward and with little sympathy. We had something like an hour and a half of stumbling through the swamp, when suddenly we stood in the little trail! Slight as it was, it

appeared to us a very Broadway of Paradise, if broad ways ever lead thither. Phelps hailed it, and sank down in it like one reprieved from death. But the boat? Leaving him, we quickly ran a quarter of a mile down to the inlet. The boat was there. Our shout to the guide would have roused him out of a death slumber. He came down the trail with the agility of an aged deer; never was so glad a sound in his ear, he said, as that shout. It was in a very jubilant mood that we emptied the boat of water, pushed off, shipped the clumsy oars, and bent to the two-mile row through the black waters of the winding, desolate channel, and over the lake, whose dark waves were tossed a little in the morning breeze. The trunks of dead trees stand about this lake, and all its shores are ragged with ghastly drift-wood; but it was open to the sky, and although the heavy clouds still obscured all the mountain ranges we had a sense of escape and freedom that almost made the melancholy scene lovely.

How lightly past hardship sits upon us! All the misery of the night vanished, as if it had not been, in the shelter of the log cabin at Mud Pond, with dry clothes that fitted us as the skin of the bear fits him in the spring, a noble breakfast, a toasting fire, solicitude about our comfort, judicious sympathy with our suffering, and willingness to hear the now growing tale of our adventure. Then came, in a day of absolute idleness, while the showers came and went, and the mountains appeared and disappeared in sun and storm, that perfect physical enjoyment which consists in a feeling of strength without any inclination to use it, and in a delicious languor which is too enjoyable to be surrendered to sleep.

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